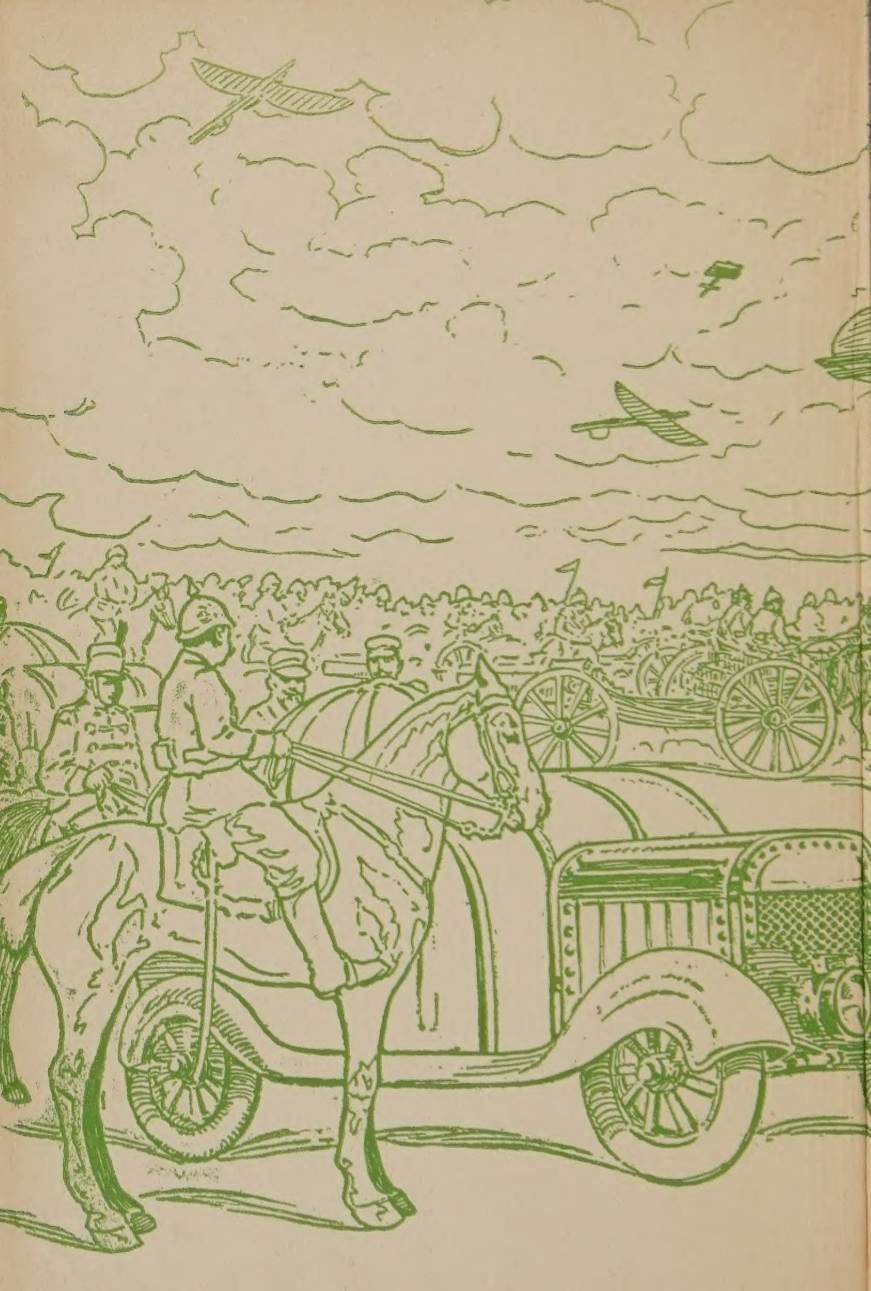
# ON BOARD THE MINE-LAYING CRUISER

COLONEL JAMES FISKE

WORLD'S WAR SERIES



# ON BOARD THE MINE-LAYING CRUISER

THE

# World's War Series

By COLONEL JAMES FISKE

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"All stations!" called Karl desperately, in the official code.
(Page 177)

World's War Series Volume 3

# On Board The Mine-Laying Cruiser

BY

Colonel James Fiske

Illustrated by E. A. FURMAN

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# On Board The Mine-Laying Cruiser

## CHAPTER I

### HISTORIC GROUND

Two boys walking along a dusty country road, stout sticks in their hands, knapsacks on their backs, turned a corner in the road and saw the water of a quiet river glistening before them like a ribbon of silver, tinged with all the colors of the rainbow in the light of the setting sun.

"The Meuse!" said one.

"The Meuse? Really, Karl?" echoed the other. "Then that smoke over there—?"

He pointed to the northwest.

"Is from the houses of Sedan!" Karl Adler completed his friend's sentence.

For a moment they were silent. There were memories in the sight of that river for these boys —Karl Adler and Heinrich von Kunst. They had

trudged from beyond the Rhine to see it. And of late every foot of their way had carried them through ground that they knew almost by heart. The names of the villages spoke to them of the days of 1870, when other Germans had trodden these same roads before them, and when many and many a German had stayed behind, for the honor of the fatherland. And now they were approaching the scene of the climax of the wonder year. The smoke, curling so peacefully from the chimney-tops of Sedan, melted away over the ground that had been hidden nearly forty years before by the different smoke of battle. In the fields about them the iron ring of Prussia and Bavaria, of Saxony and Baden had closed about the French. This very road, on those days of battle, had been swept by an iron hail of bullets and cannon balls.

It was Heinrich who roused himself first from the spell that the scene cast over them both.

"Come on, Karl," he said. "It's getting late. If we are to find a good place to stay in Sedan, we

had better be going along. They sup early, these French people."

"Yes, I suppose so," said Karl dreamily. "I think I shall almost know the houses, if they have not changed them too much, Heinrich. My grandfather has often told me of the house in which he slept on the night that the French emperor surrendered. I should like very much to stay there to-night."

"As for me," said Heinrich, "I don't care where we stay, so long as there is much food and a soft bed to sleep on. I am tired!"

"So am I," confessed Karl. "Well, we have an excuse for being tired, Heinrich. We have tramped a good many miles since we left home. And to-day it was the longest stage of all. We were up at six this morning, you remember. But I wanted to sleep in Sedan to-night."

"We're going to," said Heinrich. "We'd better not let the Frenchies see too much of how we feel, though. They remember Sedan, too. Poor people! But it was their own fault. They forced

us to go to war back in the year of 1870."

"And they will force the Kaiser to go to war again some day, Heinrich. They want to get Elsass and Lethringen back—Alsace and Lorraine, they call the provinces that we took from them."

"Didn't they get enough the first time, I wonder?" asked Heinrich. "Well, we shall see! We need not be afraid with one like our Kaiser to guard the empire. See, Karl! I remember this spot from what I have heard. It was here that one regiment held back a French division for three hours until the reserves came up. They were trying to fight their way by, but they could not cross the river—or when they crossed, they were pushed back at once."

And so they walked along, in scenes that were full of the most vivid sort of historical interest, since it was history that had been made almost in their own time. It was on these fields, along the banks of this river, that the country they were so proud of had really established itself. It was

the great victory of Sedan, when the last free army of France had been crushed and captured, that had made the triumph of Prussia and her allies possible, and so led to the crowning of the emperor at Versailles while his guns thundered at the defenses of Paris in the last act of the great war.

Karl and Heinrich, fellow students in the gymnasium of their home city of Dusseldorf, and fellow members, also, of the Pfadfinder of that city, as the Boy Scouts are called in Germany, had elected this summer to enjoy a walking tour during their vacation. They had long planned such a vacation, but not until this year had it been decided that they were to be trusted to leave home by themselves. But they found the pleasures of the trip far exceeded their anticipations, and long waiting had not dulled their enjoyment of the freedom from restraint that they had felt when they were once off.

Both of them were beginning to think of the time when they would enter the army in the

service of the Kaiser and the empire. Both wanted to be officers, but neither of them was yet quite sure that he would be able to gratify that ambition. But they would be soldiers, for even now each was big and strong, and sure to pass the rigid physical examination without which no German soldier is enlisted. For them service in the army was to be expected, as a matter of course. Every German boy expects to serve his term with the colors, and most of them look forward eagerly to the years of soldiering.

It was natural, therefore, that when they planned their trip, Karl and Heinrich should have wished to see the battlefields of the last great war in which the Germans had fought. They had taken the train to Karlsruhe, and thence had begun their walk. Their course had taken them through Weissenburg, where the first pitched battle of the great war had been fought; thence through Woerth and the heights of Speichern, following the path of the great army that von Moltke had led into what was then French terri-

tory. They had seen Metz, now a vast German fortress, in which forty-four years before Marshal Bazaine, hailed as the greatest general in Europe, had been locked up by the Red Prince, Frederick Charles of Prussia. They had seen the terrible fields of Gravelotte and Vienville-Mars le Tour, where pleasant villages now stood again, and the grain was in the fields ripening for the harvest. And so they had come to Sedan, where the marvelous summer campaign of 1870 had ended in the complete and dazzling triumph of German arms.

Next day they would see the field where the last heroic charge of the Cuirassiers of France had been made—the final desperate effort of the French army to escape from the trap that German bravery had forced it to enter.

But for the night there was nothing for them to do but sleep, after they had eaten.

"I have wondered sometimes," said Heinrich, as they neared Sedan, "what these French people would think if they knew that our grandfathers had fought against them in the war?"

"So have I," said Karl, gravely. "After all, they do not know, I suppose, that they were in the wrong. They fought and they were beaten. It is easy for us to be friendly. But for them it must be very hard. Scarcely a family here in this country, I suppose, can fail to have legends of that invasion. And yet they have been kind to us. They have given us of their best, and you know that many of them would not let us pay."

"That's so. And they must know that we are Germans. We don't look like their boys, and I know that I don't speak French like a native yet. My voice is German. So is yours, though you speak French better than I do, Karl."

"I don't think so, Heinrich. Yes, they know that we are Germans, but I don't think they are always thinking of war. Some of the French think of revenge—the officers mostly, I believe, in Paris. These people remember what war means. They are on the frontier. The older ones can remember when battles were fought around their homes, and when whole villages were burned."

"Yes, and they are so near to Germany that perhaps they know how strong our army is, and how it would come down upon them if there was war. I think you're right, Karl, and that they are willing to let bygones be bygones. They are not such good fighters, the French."

"Don't you believe that, Heinrich! My grandfather says the French soldiers were just as brave as our men, and fought just as well. He says they make as good troops as any in the world. But they were badly led, and they were not ready before, when they thought they were. That was why we beat them so easily. And really it was not so easy, after all—"

"Not easy? When the Germans didn't lose a single real battle from the beginning of the war to the end?"

"No. Every battle was hard fought. At Mars le Tour even the King thought we had lost, and so did Prince Bismarck and Count von Moltke. If Bazaine had known how to lead as well as his men knew how to fight, we would have lost that

battle," said Karl, who knew his history well.

Then they came to Sedan. The house which Karl finally pointed out as the one in which his grandfather had slept after the surrender was empty now, and he could not gratify his wish to stay there. But they found another house where lodgings were to be had, without any difficulty, and here they got excellent food and good beds. But before they slept, just as they were finishing their meal, they had an experience that was curious and novel, and a little disquieting. A sergeant of police came in as they sat at the table, and questioned them closely as to their names, their homes, and their destinations. He was perfectly agreeable, but it was the first time that anything of the sort had happened, and they were curious. They asked no questions in their turn, however, and the official seemed to be easily satisfied.

"I wonder what that was for?" asked Heinrich, when they had gone to their room.

"I don't know," said Karl, with knitted brows. "Perhaps he thought we were spies!"

"Then why didn't it happen anywhere else?"

"I don't know," said Karl, again. "We haven't seen a newspaper since we left Karlsruhe, Heinrich. Do you suppose there can be any news that would account for it? They are always careful along the border, I suppose. But we are not near any fortress except Mezieres."

"Well, I'm not going to lie awake thinking about it," said Heinrich. "That's one thing that is sure. Let's go to sleep, Karl. In the morning we can find out."

"Perhaps another Zeppelin has flown across the border by mistake and been forced to land," said Karl. "Do you remember that one from Cologne did do that not so many months ago? It came down at Longwy, and they arrested the crew until the officials at Berlin had apologized and explained that it was an accident."

"Yes, I do remember it now, Karl. But even if that were so, what would we have to do with it? We shan't find out by staying awake, anyhow. Let's go to sleep. Good-night!"

## CHAPTER II

### THE MARCHING SOLDIERS

Great events, indeed, had transpired while Karl and Heinrich had been tramping across country, cut off from newspapers and the news of the world. Austria's long slumbering rage at the aggressions of Servia, culminating, as Austria firmly believed, in the murder of the heir to the imperial throne as the result of a conspiracy which, according to the Austrian charge, Servia had deliberately fostered, had flamed out at last. She had made demands on Servia. Russia had backed the little state in its refusal to obey those demands. And now all Europe was struggling to bring about agreement. Nothing had actually been done as yet. Every country was waiting, holding its forces in leash, anxious that another should take the aggressor's part, if aggression there was to be after the long peace.

It was not strange that Karl and Heinrich should

have been in ignorance of much that was almost common property in England and America. In Germany and, for that matter, in France, it was a secret game that the statesmen played. They had no mind to unchain the passions of the people, and so perhaps to allow a demand for war to arise that it might be impossible to ignore. Undoubtedly, as Heinrich and Karl were to know afterward, it was that fear of war that officials both in Berlin and in Paris held that had inspired the police inquisition to which they were subjected.

Mobilization had not yet been ordered, but each country was ready. A single word, and the order that would mean war would be flashed from one end of France to the other, from the Russian frontier of Germany to the last district in the corner between France and Switzerland. And what the common people did not know the officials of all ranks and the police understood thoroughly. It was a time when on both sides of the border spies naturally might be expected to be active.

In the morning Karl and Heinrich got papers. But they were journals of the previous day, and there was little in them that was enlightening. Censors had been at work already. There were reports of the trouble between Austria and Servia, but there was little to show that the quarrel was more important than those that had come up so many times in the last few years—nothing to show that other powers were involved, much less that there might be war.

And so, in that late July of 1914, the two German boys paid their reckoning and began their day's tramp. They meant to go south and west, toward Rheims. They were anxious to see the famous cathedral. Rheims was to represent the limit of their journey into France and from that city they would turn east again, and walk back, through Chalons and Nancy, to the frontier at Avricourt, and on to Strassburg, where they would find a Rhine steamer to take them home.

They were still on ground that was historic in a way, but with Sedan they left behind them the

last great battlefield of the war of 1870. The fighting in the territory they now entered had been more of a guerilla sort, and they found other things than thoughts of war and fighting to occupy their minds. They were coming into the famous grape country of France. All about them were vineyards, with the grapes, still green and small, clustered on the vines. The weather was delightful; the countryside they thought was beautiful.

"Let's sleep in the open air to-night, Heinrich," proposed Karl. "You know we planned to do that once or twice before we get back to Strassburg. We can make an easy stage to-day, and rest a long time at noon. That's the way the Boy Scouts do in England and America. We'll make a camp fire and a lean-to."

"Splendid!" agreed Heinrich, enthusiastically. "We certainly can't hope to find better weather. There's not a cloud in the sky."

He looked up as he spoke, and his gaze remained fixed on the sky.

"Look up there, Karl!" he said. "Do you see —to the south? It looks like aeroplanes—a lot of them, a regular flock."

"You're right!" said Karl. "Why, there must be a dozen! No, there are more than that! They're flying in a regular formation, too! I believe they must be military aeroplanes. All monoplanes—and they're certainly flying fast, too!"

There was no doubt of that. Only a minute before they had difficulty in distinguishing the specks in the sky, but now the great bird-like machines were taking form. In a few minutes, while the two boys still were rooted to the spot, the flock swept over them, flying toward Verdun. They could count twenty of the machines, and as they passed above them they could hear the whirring of the propellers.

"They must be having manoeuvres," said Heinrich. "Don't they look splendid? But we've got them, too!"

"Manoeuvres—yes," said Karl, thoughtfully.

"But it's not the regular time for them. I wonder, now, what they're doing that for."

"Our men are always practicing," said Heinrich. "It doesn't mean anything in particular, Karl. Come on! They're almost out of sight now. If we're going to camp out to-night, we've got to get some things. Eggs and milk, if we can, I think. We've got almost everything, haven't we, in our packs except bread? We'll need some of that, won't we?"

"It would be better, of course," said Karl gravely, though he was much amused by his chum's concern for their breakfast. "We won't have any trouble getting what we need. We'll find plenty of farmhouses everywhere if we're not near a town, where they'll be glad to sell us anything we want. There's no need to burden ourselves with carrying anything until it begins tc get dark."

Twice more that day, as they tramped along, they saw flocks of aeroplanes flying, like the first, in a regular formation. And single monoplanes

were so numerous that they paid no attention at all to them. Before the afternoon was over, even Heinrich admitted that the sight of so many fliers was unusual.

"I don't know what to make of it, but I think it's got something to do with that police sergeant who was so curious about us last night," said Karl. "Heinrich, I almost wish we were back in Germany!"

"Why? What do you think is wrong, Karl?"

"I don't know, but I feel strange. As if something were going to happen. Don't you ever feel that way, without being able to tell what it is that you expect?"

"No, I never do."

"Then I can't make you understand. It is a sort of premonition. But I'm sure, anyway, that there is something in the air. I wish we knew more of what was going on."

"Well, we don't, so there's no use worrying over it. We can't help it, can we? And if we can't help it, we're only wasting time in thinking about

it! Look, Karl, there is a bird of a sort I never saw before. What do you suppose it is?"

Karl was interested at once. The Pfadfinder of Germany, while they had not adopted all of the regulations and customs of the Boy Scouts in England and America by any means, had made a point of nature study, and all members were expected to pay special attention to birds and animals of a strange type that they might see when they were away from home. So now they began to observe such things more closely, and they found plenty that was new and interesting as they continued their tramp. They met French peasants from time to time, all of whom saluted them cheerfully and pleasantly. If their appearance, so plainly German, excited any comment, they did not hear of it.

When it was beginning to grow dark they came to a field in the shadow of a little clump of woods that seemed to Karl an ideal place for their camp. Not far away was a farmhouse, and to this they went to make their purchases. They found it

easy to buy all they wanted,—fresh eggs, a pail of sweet milk, and two long loaves of newly baked bread. And they got permission, also, to sleep in the field, although the peasant seemed shocked at the idea, and urged them most hospitably to share his roof for the night.

"There is plenty of room, ma foi!" he said. "Both my sons are away with the army—Francois in his first year, Emile in his second. Their room is empty, and you are welcome to it. No need to sleep out in the cold."

He seemed to think they were too poor to pay for lodgings. But Karl laughed.

"It is not from necessity, but from choice," he said. "We like to sleep in the open air. At home we do it often."

"You like strange things," said the farmer. "But if that is your pleasure, you are welcome to do it. Do not trample on the grain. That is all I ask."

And so they built their fire in a bare spot and cooked their dinner. Then they built a lean-to

against a stone wall, and got out the rubber blankets they carried in their packs. And when all their preparations for the night were made, they sat and talked of many things—of the fatherland and its glorious history, and of the years that were coming in the army.

"We shall go up in the same year if we are not to be officers, Karl," said Heinrich. "I hope that we will be assigned to the same regiment, perhaps to the same company. Then when we are men and soldiers, we shall swear blood brotherhood, nicht so?"

"Yes, little Heinrich," said Karl, affectionately. Though they were of almost the same age, Karl being only a few weeks the older, he had always taken the lead. Heinrich looked up to him in many ways, since Karl was stronger and more active. In all sorts of sport he was the leader and it was Heinrich's delight to follow him.

"Listen," said Heinrich. "Is that an insect?"

They looked up.

"An insect of a sort—yes," said Karl, dryly.

"It has wings—but a man made them. It is the monoplanes. There goes one—I see another coming from Rheims. Heinrich, something is in the air. I feel as if great things were about to happen. They tell us always that at any time there may be war—that the fatherland must always be prepared. Do you suppose—?"

"War?" said Heinrich, getting up to follow the flight of the monoplane they had heard until it was out of sight. "Yes, they say there may be war at any time. But without warning, without talk, for weeks before? Do you think that possible?"

"It is the nation that strikes first and before its enemy is prepared that wins," said Karl. "I do not know, Heinrich. There is a strange feeling that I have had all day. And the monoplanes. I wish we were safely home!"

Heinrich did not answer. He was a little awed by the way Karl spoke. He felt that Karl was seeing things, or feeling them, at least, that were beyond his ken.

"I am sleepy," he said. "Let us lie down now, and go to sleep. Good-night!"

Karl smiled.

"Lie down, then, and sleep, slothful one," he said. "I will keep watch for a while. Let us imagine that we are in a hostile country. I will be sentinel."

Soon Heinrich was asleep, but Karl sat brooding, his eyes looking past the fire into the darkness. Once or twice he dozed. But it was still very dark and there was much of the night left, when Heinrich awoke suddenly, startled by something, to find the fire out and Karl missing. He did not cry out; he was still too sleepy to realize fully what he saw. And in a moment Karl came back. But he came crawling along the ground.

"The fire is out!" said Heinrich. "I thought it would last all night."

"I stamped it out," whispered Karl. "Listen, Heinrich! In the road, yonder, French soldiers have been passing for the last hour. For five minutes none have passed. But listen now!"

"I hear a strange sound," said Heinrich, presently. He lifted puzzled eyes to Karl. "What is it, Karl?"

"The tramp of marching feet," said Karl. "More are coming. They are marching, thousands of them, with their red legs, toward the fatherland!"

## CHAPTER III

### THE SHADOW OF WAR

In the faint light they stared at one another. Through each there passed a strange and mysterious thrill. Was it coming, at last, the war that they had been taught to know must surely come sooner or later? What else could this mean? The steady sound of marching feet coming nearer, nearer all the time? There could be only one destination for French soldiers marching so—the frontier. Without a word, moved by the same thought, they crept to the edge of their field. They were a little above the road here and they could see it stretching away, grey and dim in the distance, into the heart of France, toward Germany. Over it there hung a little cloud of dust. And suddenly, as their eyes were focused on a turn in the road, the road itself was blotted out as they looked.

Where it had been came men. Toward them

they came, the beat of their measured marching sending waves of sound through the still night air, like the waves of the sea rolling in upon a sandy beach. Spellbound they watched.

First came three officers on horseback. And behind them were the men. They marched along doggedly, cheerfully. Smiles were on their faces, young faces most of them—all of them, indeed. There were troops of the first line, the regulars of France, who were finishing their training with the colors. Now when they had been thinking about going back to civil life, back to their farms, their workshops, their counters, France had called them. A regiment passed. Then came guns, lumbering along. They had heard the heavier note of the guns before the pieces themselves had come in sight. But even so, the march was a silent one. There was no singing. German troops, except under the strictest orders for silence, would have raised their voices in song as they marched along. Not a bugle sounded. When any orders were to be given the officers passed

them along to the sergeants in low, hushed voices.

For hours they watched, and still the troops were passing. The first hint of dawn crept into the eastern sky. Over Germany, the dearly loved fatherland, the sun was rising now. Finally the last French soldier had passed.

"How many have gone by?" asked Heinrich, awed. "I could not count them."

"I did not try," said Karl. It was a relief to be able to speak again in a natural tone. "But I watched the organizations. It is a whole division that has passed, except for its cavalry. That may be on another road. Nearly twenty thousand men —the infantry and the guns of a division, half an army corps. They are marching from Chalons, I think. They must be going to Verdun, where the French have a strong garrison already."

He was very thoughtful.

"That is strange; that is curious," he said. "Always I have heard that the first fighting would not be on the eastern frontier; that the French would advance through Belgium, perhaps through

Luxemburg. Yet they are sending their troops this way instead of toward the sea, to the north."

"Karl, you speak as though this meant war!"

"It does," said Karl. "I am sure of it, Heinrich. We do not know what has happened. We have seen few newspapers, and if we had seen them there might be little within. And we have talked only to peasants. We can scarcely guess what we might have learned if we had been at home. I am sure of this much: some great crisis has developed in these days when we have been walking. If war has not been declared, it is a matter of hours."

Karl did not speak enthusiastically, as some boys might have done. His voice was sober, and Heinrich was just as grave. Yet there was no fear in his voice, either, nor in his friend's manner. These boys knew something of what war might mean. Each of them was thinking of men they knew, only a few years older than they, who within a few days might be facing the soldiers they had seen passing, guns in hand. They were

calling the roll mentally of the relatives who would be gone when they reached Dusseldorf again. Heinrich's brother was a captain in a regiment of Uhlans; Karl's uncle commanded a regiment stationed, with its corps, at Konigsberg and their fathers would go, too. To them war was not a glorious thing that would not really touch them. It would come home to them in all its meaning, as it would to every family in the fatherland.

"Karl!" said Heinrich, suddenly. "If there is war, will they let us go home?"

"I hope so," said Karl, seriously. "I have been thinking of that, Heinrich, since I saw the first soldier pass along this road. We are not old enough to fight, it is true. But that is not the only reason for keeping us in France. They might think that we had seen things that no foreigner would be allowed to see. And, even if they were willing for us to go, we could not return as we have come. There will be new battlefields along the Meuse, Heinrich. If the armies bar our way

then we must think of some other road to travel."

"But perhaps it does not mean war," said Heinrich. "We have been told before that war was coming, and it has been a false alarm."

"This time we have been told nothing," said Karl grimly. "That makes it look worse to me than if there had been much talk. I think we are in a tight place, Heinrich. But so long as we are here, let us keep our eyes open. Who knows? Even you and I might learn something that the fatherland would find it useful to know."

"What can we learn, Karl? We could not get near a fortress, especially now. And we have had spies at work, have we not?"

"I suppose so," said Karl. "Still, there are things for us to do. Whenever I could, while those troops were passing, I tried to get the numbers of the regiments. If we see soldiers to-day, let us be sure to try to find out what regiments they belong to, and remember where we saw men of those regiments."

"What good would that do?"

"You said our spies had been at work, Heinrich. I believe that our general staff knows every regiment in every French corps just as I suppose the French know all about where our men are stationed—that such-and-such a regiment belongs to such a corps, and is stationed at Strassburg, or Coblenz, or Cologne. Think, then. If we could tell, when we get back to Germany, where we had seen men of this French regiment or that, the officers we told would know where certain corps were being sent. Can't you see how valuable that would be?"

"Oh, yes. I was stupid, Karl! They would know, then, that one corps was moving toward Verdun or Belfort, and we would send troops enough to care for it. Yes, I understand. I will write down the regiments as I see their men, and where I saw them."

"No. Remember it in your head, Heinrich. Suppose we wrote down things, and were made prisoners. They would search us, and if they found that we had been writing down information

of their troops, they would be sure that we were spies. That would be too dangerous, and we could not help the fatherland if we were held in France as spies."

"I never thought of that, Karl, but you're right. I will try to remember what I see without writing it down at all."

"Good! That is the best way. It is so that we can best hope to serve the fatherland now."

"Karl, why couldn't they have waited a little, if there is really to be a war? Until you and I were old enough to be in it, and to fight for Germany."

"I don't suppose they thought of that, Heinrich," said Karl, with a laugh. "But don't worry about not being able to help the fatherland. When all the men are at the front, there will be plenty for boys to do. We must take the place of the fighters, if we can. And we scouts ought to be able to do many things. Besides, Heinrich, we may still be called on to fight."

"We are too young," said Heinrich. "They

would never let us boys go into the army, I know."

"We are too young now," said Karl. "But if the war lasts a long time perhaps we might have to go before it was over."

"A long time?" said Heinrich, astonished. "But it will be a short war, Karl. We shall win easily, and quickly."

"We don't know that, Heinrich," said Karl. "I hope you are right. But this time it may not be like the last war. Then we fought France alone, and she was not ready. Now she has been waiting for forty years and more, and dreaming always of revenge. She will be readier, stronger, than she was then. And this time, too, it is not France alone that we must fight. Russia will be on her side. Perhaps England, too."

"And Austria and Italy will fight with us! Remember the Triple Alliance."

"Austria will fight with us, yes. But we are not sure of Italy. The Italians hate the Austrians; they are afraid of them, too. Perhaps Italy will not fight."

"Well, it doesn't matter! As for the Russians —bah! Didn't the Japanese beat them almost as easily as we beat the French?"

"No. They just barely managed to beat them, Heinrich. Perhaps if peace had not come when it did, Russia would have turned around and begun to win. Russia had to fight Japan thousands of miles away from home. She had to send her troops across Siberia, Heinrich."

"Yes, that did make a difference, I suppose."

"All the difference in the world. Now she has us and Austria on her own border. And I believe the Russians learned their lesson in the war with Japan. They will not be so easy to beat this time."

"They will attack us on all sides!" said Heinrich, hotly. "That is the coward's way. They know that alone none of them could beat Germany. Deutschland ueber alles! We will beat the whole world, if we must, Karl."

"I believe it," said Karl, seriously. "God has always helped the fatherland. But it may take a

long time. Perhaps we can beat France first, while Russia is still preparing to fight. But we cannot be sure. Perhaps we shall have to fight them both at once. And there are so many, many millions of Russians! As fast as one army is beaten, they can raise another. And they fight well, those Russians. They fought well against the Japanese, but they were badly led."

"We shall see," said Heinrich. He was imbued with the idea that Germany was invincible. "It is almost morning in earnest, Karl. What shall we do? Turn back or go on?"

"First we must try to make sure of what has happened," said Karl. "Then, if we can, I think we would have a better chance if we got over the French frontier and into Belgium. That is supposed to be a neutral country. But I think that there will be fighting there."

"Not at first, perhaps," said Heinrich, hopefully.

"That is what I mean," said Karl. "If we could get across Belgium and into Holland, we

should be safe. They are friendly to Germans in Holland, I think. And, once we were there, I am sure we should find some way of getting home. If we could get to Antwerp it would be easy to reach Holland—it is almost on the frontier."

"Can we stay here for breakfast?"

"No, I think we had better not." Karl got out a road map, intended for the use of automobilists, which had been their guide. "This road has been used by the troops already. Perhaps it will be used again. Suppose we go across the fields to a road that is not so good? They might not be using that, and we should have a better chance."

"And we can get breakfast, I suppose, at some peasant's house. Don't you think we could, Karl?"

"I suppose so," said Karl, who could not help being amused by the persistence of his chum's appetite. It seemed that nothing could make him insensible to the coming of meal time, not even the practical certainty that war had come.

## CHAPTER IV

### A DANGEROUS TRICK

Although it was morning, it was still very early —too early for even the industrious French people whose hospitality had almost been thrust upon them the previous night to be up and out. Heinrich, as they were putting all the things that they had used during the night in their packs, cast many a wistful look at the house. But Karl was obdurate.

"We're not going back there for breakfast, Heinrich," he said, firmly. "I don't care if you starve to death—which you won't do, even if you miss your meals for a whole day! Look here—they know where we spent the night. Perhaps they have been warned by officers to keep their eyes open for any people who look like Germans. How do we know? They would be sure that we had seen those soldiers passing. And so we have got to get away."

For a moment Heinrich said nothing. But then he found a forgotten cake of chocolate in his pack, and gave a cry of joy.

"That will keep us alive!" he cried, happily. "Here, Karl, take half!"

"Save half. We don't know how long it may be before we get a real breakfast," laughed Karl. "It may have to be lunch, too. And I'm not hungry."

Heinrich was munching his share of the chocolate already. They always carried chocolate, for they knew that no food so easily carried is so sustaining if meals are to be missed, and that every soldier's emergency ration includes chocolate as a matter of course.

"Karl," said Heinrich, in a moment, "I have been thinking. It may be the war is not so near as we think; that it is only the French who are preparing. Suppose they see a chance to strike before we are ready. Couldn't they get a great advantage? Couldn't they mobilize secretly?"

"I don't believe so," said Karl, dubiously. "To

mobilize means to take men from every sort of occupation. No, we have too many Germans in France. The word would go back quickly."

"I'm ready," said Heinrich, a few minutes later. "Which way?"

"To those woods, beyond us there. We can get through, and there will be less chance of being seen. I wish we knew what was going on. But I am afraid to ask. They would know us for Germans, and we might be arrested at any moment."

"That's my fault," said Heinrich. "I can scarcely speak French. Anyone would know that I was not French as soon as I opened my mouth. I could not pass even for an Alsatian!"

"Heinrich! You have given me an idea, at least! We will go along. When we come to a good place, I will go out by myself and try to find out the truth and get food for our breakfast, too. If they detect my accent, I will speak of Alsace."

"And if you are arrested, what am I to do? Wait for you to return until I starve?"

"Of course not! Don't act as if you were stupid, Heinrich! If I do not come back in an hour or two, go out boldly. Even if you are arrested, they won't hurt you. They will feed you and look after you well."

"If I could speak French, I could go with you," complained Heinrich. "After this I shall study more diligently. I see now that lessons are useful. I used to think they were just stupid."

"We're not very near to school now," said Karl, soberly. "If there is war, we don't know how long it will be before we can go back. The teachers will have to go to fight."

In the woods they found everything quiet and peaceful. Here and there they came upon swineherds with their flocks of pigs, who looked at them indifferently, with stupid eyes. But there was no sign, naturally enough, of anything warlike. It was nearly noon when they began to emerge from the forest.

"There was a time when all this country was covered by a forest," said Karl. "We are in the

forest of Arden, Heinrich. You have read *As You Like It*—it was part of our English course."

"Yes, yes—I remember," said Heinrich. "But they had plenty to eat, Rosalind and the rest, even if they were in exile!"

"Well, soon we shall have plenty, too," said Karl, cheerfully. "Over there is a village. Do you see the smoke rising from the trees? I am going there to find out what there is to be known, and to get food. You wait here for me for an hour. If I am not back then, you had better follow me but if you should see me as a prisoner, do not admit that you know me. Pretend that you have never seen me before. Do you understand?"

"No, but I will do as you say, Karl. You are captain here, not I. I do not have to understand."

So Karl started off by himself. When he reached the road he looked at it carefully. Dry though it was, it was deeply rutted, and Karl thought he knew why. Guns had passed over it in the night—heavy guns drawn by motor tractors, or by great teams of heavy horses. No ordi-

nary, peaceful traffic would leave such scars behind it.

When he came to a crossroad he stopped a moment for ahead was a little group of five or six men trudging along in a manner quite different from that of the ordinary peasant. Each carried a bundle, slung at the end of a stick, which was over his shoulder. And there were three women with them, each by the side of a man, clinging to his arm.

"Reservists," said Karl to himself. "Then mobilization must have been ordered. I must be careful."

In the village work had stopped. The men who had entered the main road before him went straight to the mairie. And others followed them, carrying their bundles, too. Karl went in the same direction and outside the office of the mayor he saw a poster. A glance was enough to show him that it was the official order of mobilization. He had been right. It was war! And in a moment a man tapped him on the shoulder.

"You are a stranger?" he said. "It is required that you report yourself at once to the police."

"Willingly," said Karl. His accent betrayed him. The man gave a start, and stared at him.

"You are a German!" he said, as if he were uttering a terrible accusation.

"By law!" said Karl, his eyes flashing. He was acting a part, for the first time in his life, but he did well. "My name is Karl Schmidt, and I come from Strassburg."

He managed to give the name of the capital of Alsace the French sound. "I have escaped, and I am trying to make my way to Paris. I have an uncle there."

"We shall see," said the man. Plainly he was suspicious. Even Karl's youth did not altogether remove his suspicions. "Monsieur le Maire will see you. Then we shall know. Germans are not allowed about here."

Karl was perfectly willing to be taken to the office of the mayor of the commune. He had anticipated close questioning. And now he went

with his captor without the slightest trace of resistance. It was a time to match his wits, rather than his strength, against the enemies of the fatherland. In the office he had to wait while reservists reported themselves, showed their book, in which appeared instructions as to the place of reporting, and the day of mobilization on which each man was required to report, and received permission to be off again. Then the official, a small, middle-aged man, turned to Karl. The man who had brought him in made his report.

"Says he is an Alsatian—hein?" commented the mayor. "Well, then, perhaps he will have valuable information. Who knows? He must wait, in any case. There will be those here soon who will know how to talk with him. Ah, I hear the bugles now!"

Karl heard them, too. He followed the mayor and Andre Froissard, as he learned his captor was called, to the window. Into the village a regiment of chasseurs was riding—the fine light cavalry of the French army. The people cheered them en-

thusiastically. Women strewed flowers before them, and flung garlands about the men and the horses, and from the sidewalks men and women alike cheered and cried: "à Berlin—à Berlin!"

Karl smiled. To Berlin, indeed! Well, they might reach Berlin, these Frenchmen. But it would be as prisoners, if they did. Had they learned no lessons about over-confidence forty years before? It seemed not, and that meant that they must be taught again. But he was soon roused from such thoughts, for the colonel and several other officers dismounted; the bugles sounded "Halt!" and the regiment came to rest. Plainly it was to stop here for the midday meal. And it was plain, too, that he was to be cross-examined by these officers.

He nerved himself for what was almost sure to be an ordeal. He would have to lie, and Karl was unused to that. But he reminded himself that it was lawful, it was even praiseworthy, to deceive the enemy. He knew about what he meant to do; the details he could not decide upon in advance.

His answers must depend to some extent on the questions that would be asked. He meant, of course, to give no information of a sort that could by any chance be valuable to the French, although, as it happened, he might have done so. He had heard the course of a possible war with France discussed very often, and he had a much better notion of what the German plans for the first sharp blows would be than even many officers of line regiments.

"We have a prisoner, Monsieur le Colonel," said the mayor, pompously, after he had exchanged compliments with Colonel Picard. "He says he is from Strassburg."

"A prisoner? Hold, he is only a boy!" said the colonel, with a laugh. "Come here, my lad, and tell me about yourself. If you are from Strassburg, how come you here?"

"I did not want to be there if the Germans were going to put Alsace under martial law!" he said. "I wanted to be in France. I hoped that perhaps I could fight for France, that I would be allowed

to help to make Alsace French again. So I tried to reach Paris, where my uncle could help me."

"Your uncle's name and address?" said Colonel Picard, instantly.

For just a moment Karl was dismayed. He had not expected that question, and he had no answer. But on the spur of the moment he invented a name and address.

"Take it down," said the colonel, to one of his staff. "Send a telegram, requiring the police to verify what this boy says." Then he turned to Karl again. "What did you see before you left Alsace?" he asked. "Were there many German soldiers?"

"Thousands," said Karl, earnestly. "We heard that they were coming from all directions, to concentrate at Strassburg. I saw many myself."

"Did you see any regiments? Of what corps were they?"

This was the sort of question Karl had expected. And now he gave full rein to his imagina-

tion. He named regiments and told of having seen men belonging to them in Strassburg, when he knew very well that those particular regiments would concentrate at Cologne or Aix-la-Chapelle. And he saw that he was making an impression on Colonel Picard, who turned with smiling face to his staff.

"You wish to serve France, Karl Schmidt?" he asked, exchanging glances with the other officers.

"Yes, my colonel."

"Perhaps we can use you, then. I will give orders that you are to be taken with us when we march from here. We may be in Alsace before long. For a day or two you can serve as a guide. Then I will see that you are sent back to Paris to your uncle. Now I will order a sergeant to assign you to a mess. That is enough. I will send for you when you are wanted again."

Now, indeed, Karl was dismayed, for the telegram to Paris would betray him; at the least he would be made a prisoner. And the false information he had given would not be believed.

## CHAPTER V

### A LUCKY CHANCE

Karl's wits were sharpened by the dangerous position in which he found himself. While Colonel Picard gave his orders regarding him to a sergeant, he watched the lieutenant who had been ordered to telegraph concerning him attentively. This lieutenant had written down on a piece of paper the name and address that Karl had selected so wholly at random, and this he carried in his hand. Karl itched to get at that piece of paper. To do so might do him no good, yet plainly it was the first thing to be done.

His problem was a double one. His first task, of course, was to escape from the care of these Frenchmen and to rejoin Heinrich. But he wanted passionately to effect his escape in such a manner that what he had said concerning the disposition of German troops in Alsace might be believed. It might be, of course, that French spies

would report the truth, but he could take that chance, since he had to. If his own information, or misinformation, rather, were to be believed even for a few hours or a day or two, it might serve Germany well indeed. In the beginning of war accurate information as to the enemy's plans is essential.

Outside the door his first piece of good luck came to him.

"Wait here," said his escort, with a grin. "You won't try to get away. And there is something I want to do. I have a sweetheart here, you must understand. She will be waiting to see me."

He winked, and Karl, delighted, agreed to wait. And then the lieutenant came out with another young officer. The paper that meant so much to Karl was in his hand, but he held it lightly, and a sudden gust of wind blew it from his hand. Instantly Karl's foot covered it; the movement was instinctive. If the lieutenant missed it now, he had only to ask Karl for the name and address again. Karl scarcely breathed. But the of-

ficer was busy with whatever he was saying to his comrade, and did not notice his loss. For a moment he was safe. As soon as the officer was out of sight, Karl snatched up the paper and tore it to small pieces.

Still the problem of his escape remained. He must get away, and in some manner that would not arouse suspicion, if that were possible, before the officer discovered the loss of that paper. And even while he stood racking his brain for some means of doing so, fate supplied the chance. There was a sudden sound of sharp explosions, and a despatch rider, mounted on a motorcycle, came speeding up to the mairie. The colonel appeared on the step; the messenger saluted him, and handed him a paper which Colonel Picard tore open. In a moment his whole appearance changed. He was galvanized into action. He cried out his orders; bugle calls broke out on the still air. And within five minutes the regiment was off, its noonday meal forgotten.

Everyone in the village ran out to see the chas-

seurs ride away. Karl was forgotten and he seized the chance that luck had given him. Making off in the opposite direction, he soon came to a cottage well outside the village. There he bought bread and meat and two bottles of light wine, and began a circuit that would take him back to the spot where he had left Heinrich without making him go through the village. His time was up, but he was sure that Heinrich would wait a little longer, and he was right. His friend greeted him with a cry of joy, and when he saw the food that Karl had brought he cried out again in delight.

"I saw soldiers passing again—cavalry," he said, his mouth stuffed full of bread and meat. "I was sure they had caught you."

"They did," said Karl. And he told of his adventure. "I found out what we were nearly sure of before," he said. "It is war, Heinrich! And I am almost sure now that we cannot cross the frontier here. We must go on into France. We must let ourselves be caught and take our chance

of being sent back to Germany. I think they will let us go back."

Heinrich protested, but Karl was right, and they both knew it. There would be fighting before morning along the frontier, even though it was too early for real battles. All along the border the French soldiers would be guarding the line, just as German troops would be waiting on the other side. And, as always when Karl's mind was thoroughly made up, Heinrich gave way. Karl was the leader, and he was always able to make Heinrich see things as he did, if only he was patient enough in explaining his purpose and his meaning.

"What shall we do, then?" asked Heinrich, when the argument was over. "Walk into that village where you were and surrender?"

"No, not that," said Karl, laughing. "That is the one place in all France where I do not want them to know the truth about me, just yet, at least. No! We will keep on walking, as if we knew nothing, until we are stopped. We will say that we

have been on a walking tour, and have heard nothing of the war. Many people were surprised. They were talking in the village of how English and American travelers have been caught everywhere, unable to move since all the railways were used for soldiers. So we will be believed I think. Come, finish your meal! We will take to the open road after we leave the woods. But first we shall go south. That will take us away from where we are already known."

They followed a devious course, winding in and out of the woods, traveling through fields, avoiding the road at first, because they wanted to be sure of escaping observation until there was little or no chance that they might fall into the hands of those who had heard of Karl's detention in the morning. They saw a few people, peasants in the main, but encountered no more soldiers. Aeroplanes they saw often, but scarcely as many as they had seen the day before.

Even when they took to the road at last, and were ready and willing to surrender on demand,

they were unmolested and traveled as in peace.

"The war has come so suddenly that everyone was taken by surprise," said Karl. "If it had been expected for weeks before it broke out, we would never have come so far."

"Where are we, Karl? We have turned around so many times that I am quite lost. First the sun was behind us, then it was on one side, and then in front."

"I don't wonder you're lost," said Karl. "I have tried to keep away from the railway lines, for there are certain to be soldiers on guard every little way."

"But if we are to surrender, why not to them as well as to anyone?"

"I know—and yet I would like to learn more before we are caught, Heinrich. There is always the chance as long as we are free."

"But didn't you expect to be caught before this?"

"Yes. But I want to be caught, Heinrich, not to surrender myself. If we were French, and

traveling like this in Germany as war broke out, we would have been stopped long ago! So let us wait a little. I have a new plan. To-night I think we may still be free. If we are, let us hide near the railway from Rheims. Then perhaps I can get near enough to see what trains pass, and, if they stop, to learn what troops are in them. I think there is to be an invasion from Verdun. All the troops we saw were going that way. If they were only going to defend the fortress, they would not send so many soldiers. They are massing an army there."

"That is real scouting, Karl," said Heinrich, enthusiastically. "If we could do that, we could really be serving Germany."

The carelessness of the French, as it appeared to Karl and Heinrich, persisted. By nightfall they were quite close to the railway again, and still without being discovered. Already the work of war was evident. There were no men about and women were working in the fields. From one, who went into a little cottage, they begged a supper.

If she noticed their accent, she said nothing of it.

"You are fortunate that you are only boys," she said, bitterly. "They have taken my husband of a month. My brothers have gone. Perhaps I shall never see them again."

When they finished their supper it was quite dark. Not far away they could hear the passing of trains, and Karl got out his map.

"Here is a good place," he said, pointing. "There is a tunnel, see? If we could get near there, we might see soldiers looking out of the windows. If the light struck their uniforms we could tell the numbers of their regiments."

Karl wanted to go alone once more, but this time Heinrich was obstinate.

"No," he said, doggedly. "I am going, too. If there is danger, I will share it."

It was the first time since they had learned of the real danger of war that they had been near a railway, and now they soon found that the French were not so careless, after all. In the darkness little fires burned here and there, marking the

places where sentries were posted. And at a number of spots searchlights were active, lighting up culverts and bridges.

"Why do they do that?" asked Heinrich. "I should think that if anyone were trying to spy out how things lay, the lights would help instead of hinder them."

"They patrol the track between the fires, I think," said Karl. "And as for the searchlights, they are kept on the places where damage might be done by a few men planting bombs. If a culvert were destroyed, it would block the whole line until it could be repaired, and that might delay thousands of soldiers going to the front."

Try as they would, they could not get as near to the railroad as Karl had hoped to do. They could see trains passing, to be sure. The sparks from the engines showed vividly in the darkness, and sometimes there was less than a hundred yards between one train and the next. But the carriages were darkened, and it was impossible to discover how many men were in the trains—one

of the things that Karl had been anxious to learn. All that was certain was that many, many thousands of men were passing.

They could hear the occasional calls of the sentries, but it was disappointing work, since Karl had hoped to learn much more. At last, however, he saw a chance. They came to a brook in which the water was not deep, while it ran swiftly. The brook ran through a gully with steep sides.

"Here's our chance!" said Karl. "If we don't mind getting our feet wet, we can creep along here and get fairly close, I think. And there's a searchlight at work below. If we can keep on in the darkness, we can get to a spot where the light will be on the windows of the trains as they pass."

They crept along silently, and it turned out that Karl was right. It was hard to keep their footing in the rushing water, but they managed it. And so they were almost under the tracks at last. They could hear the sentries' voices distinctly. They were near a spot where the beat of one began and

that of his neighbor ended. And they could see the trains. Seemingly Karl's plan was to be successful. And then, just as the two sentries met within a few feet of them, Karl sneezed!

Instantly a shot rang out. Panic seized both the boys. They ran, when their one chance might have been to keep perfectly still and trust that no one had discovered the exact spot whence the sound of that treacherous sneeze had come. But they could not think of that in their excitement. It was instinct to run, and run they did.

Behind them came the two sentries. The boys could hear them calling to one another. They guessed, too, that others had joined the chase. Heinrich, as well as Karl, knew that it was likely to go hard with them if they were caught now. They had been spying on the railroad, for they could have had no other purpose in being there. And in time of war the fate of spies is an unpleasant one. Their youth would not save them; only their crime would be considered.

As soon as possible Karl gripped Heinrich's

hand and half led, half dragged him up the bank and so from the brook to the field. Not very far away was a clump of woods. If they could reach that, they might have a bare chance to escape. But it was far away, and the French soldiers were gaining. And then suddenly, without a preliminary warning of any sort, a blinding glare swept them. The field became as light as day. Amazed, they looked up, as the light passed over them. Above them was a huge, a monstrous shape.

"An airship! And a German airship!" cried Karl. They stopped, and turned toward their pursuers. They could see them now in the full glare of the searchlight from above. Both dropped to their knees and began firing, but they fired only once. For then a volley rang out from the monster above, and the searchlight winked out and then flashed down on them again. From above a voice hailed them, in German. And Karl answered, in German also.

"Help us, if you can!" he cried. "We are Germans!"

Down swooped the airship. A rope ladder came flying down toward them.

"Up with you, Heinrich!" cried Karl.

A minute later, while the Zeppelin soared higher and higher, Karl was telling their story to a German officer, in the basket-like car of one of the newest and swiftest of the aerial battleships which Germany alone had learned to make and to use. As he told his story the officer nodded repeatedly.

"You have done very well," he said. "Rest now. Later you shall tell me more. Now we have far to go, and I shall be busy."

## CHAPTER VI

### HELGOLAND

They were willing enough to be still for a time. Never had either even imagined anything half so wonderful as the experience they were now enjoying. The great airship, as long as many ships that they had seen at sea, had risen swiftly, and was now nearly half a mile above the ground. Below them they could still see the line of the railway, marked by its little twinkling spots of light from the camp fires. Trains were still passing, but now they could see them for many miles in each direction, with the fires of the engines to mark them.

The Zeppelin was flying with the wind, and there was no sense of motion. Unless they looked down they might have believed that the airship was hovering motionless in the air, so smooth was her motion. But when they did look down, they could see the land flying below them, and

they realized the immense speed of the air craft.

There was nothing terrifying, scarcely anything exciting about their sensations. There was plenty of room. They were at the stern, and above them was the great gas bag. In front was another car, in which there were more engines, and the space between the two cars was bridged, so that men could pass from one to the other in case of need. The powerful engines did their work quietly.

Little attention seemed to be required to keep the airship on her course. But there was work to be done, in spite of that. Men with night glasses were constantly peering down. They called out an observation now and then, and notes were made by an officer who had been detailed for the purpose. But at last this stopped and the officer who had received them turned to Karl with a smile.

"We are home again," he said. "That is German soil you see below you."

"And where do you land?" asked Karl.

"That I cannot say—now," said the officer,

gravely. "You understand? I believe you. I am sure that you are good German boys, and that all is well. But I have my orders. You will be safe with us, but I can tell you nothing more now. It is time for you to sleep. Take plenty of blankets and lie down. There are wraps enough, and it will be colder even than it is now before we land."

"We hoped that perhaps you would land not far from Dusseldorf or in some place where we could get a train for there," said Karl. "But it does not matter."

The officer exchanged smiles with one of the other officers. Karl guessed then that it was the mention of Dusseldorf that caused the smile, and that the Zeppelin's actual destination was probably far away. He wondered where it might be. There were hangars for Zeppelins, he knew, at Dusseldorf, at Metz, at Aix-la-Chapelle, and, of course, at Friedrichshafen on Lake Constance, where many Zeppelins were built. But he was determined not to ask questions and he nudged Heinrich, who seemed disposed to be more in-

quisitive, as a sign to refrain from inquiry.

"Zu befehl, Herr Hauptmann," he said. "We shall sleep then, and gladly. It has been a long day."

To his surprise, Karl found it an easy matter to sleep in spite of the strangeness of his surroundings. He was awakened, in fact, by the laughing voice of the officer when it was broad daylight. At once he looked over the Zeppelin's side. And below he saw the sea and a little island, near which were ugly looking warships—destroyers and a pair of light cruisers, with black smoke pouring from their funnels.

For a moment Karl was caught by the wonder of the scene. Out of a cloudless sky a blazing sun was shining down upon them. Fifteen hundred feet below and more, they could see the rippling waves. They were out of sight of land, save for the tiny island spread out below them.

"Where are we?" gasped Karl.

"Can't you guess?" asked Captain Hartmann, as Karl now knew he was called.

"Helgoland?" ventured Karl. "Then we have come so far? But are those all the ships that are here now?"

"All that are *here* now, yes," said Hartmann, grinning. "Look over there—well out to sea. Do you see anything?"

Karl looked in the direction in which the captain was pointing. And in a moment he saw what he had noticed before, but had taken for a bank of clouds.

"It is smoke," he said. He glanced at Hartmann's glass. "May I look through that?" he asked.

Hartmann handed him the glass. It was a powerful one, and through it, beneath the smoke, he could see what caused it. There lay a long, low, rakish looking ship, with four smokestacks.

"English?" he asked, unaccountably thrilled. "Then we are at war with England, too?"

"Yes, with England, too," said Hartmann. "What matter? It was bound to come. We fight France, England, Russia, Belgium. Servia and

Montenegro fight our allies, the Austrians. Perhaps Greece and Roumania will join them, and Japan. Let the whole world attack us! The fatherland will triumph! Yes, that is an English cruiser that you see. There are others near her. Cruisers and destroyers. And beyond them lie the dreadnaughts, the great battleships. They are two and three to our one. Our aeroplanes have flown over them. They blockade the whole coast."

"Will there be a battle?" asked Karl.

"Not yet," said Hartmann, soberly. "Our sailors are brave—yes, and they are good sailors, too, even if only a few years ago we had no navy worthy of the name. They are anxious to fight. For years now our officers have stood up to drink a toast—'Zum Tag'! You know what that meant?"

" 'To the day!' Yes. The day when we should meet England on the sea. Hasn't the day come?"

"No, not yet. For it would be suicide to fight in the open sea when they were three to one. But

the day will come. We have lessons to teach them first. When we fight, the odds will be much less," said the captain.

"But if they are so strong, can they not come in? Why do they stay so far out, so that we can hardly see them? Why do they not come in and attack our ships here?"

"Because there is death in every wave if they come in! Our mines are planted there—so many mines and so well laid that no ship could come in and live unless it knew where every mine was planted. And, moreover, even if there were no mines, there are forts. Ha! That was a fine joke we played on England when she gave us Helgoland! It was hers once. She would give its weight in gold for it to-day, the little isle of rock and sand that we have made a mighty fortress. Its guns command the seas about it. No battleship even can come within a mile of those guns without being blown out of the water. Here we guard the mouth of the Elbe and of the Weser."

"I see," said Karl. He drew a long breath.

"So it has all been planned! It has been arranged, long ago, just what should happen when the time came."

"Yes," said Hartmann. "Germany is not like other nations. She is prepared, always. For example, as to you and your friend. I have believed you. I have taken you into my confidence. I think you are true sons of the fatherland, and that you were in danger when I took you up with me. But if I am wrong, no harm will be done. If you have not told the truth, I shall soon know it. And then you will be shot, perhaps, or imprisoned."

He spoke calmly, in the same cool, matter-of-fact tone that seemed so wholly natural to him. The French colonel to whom Karl had deliberately given misinformation had not talked so. He wondered if he would have dared to try to trick Hartmann or any one of a hundred other German officers he had seen in the same way. Of one thing he was sure. He would not have succeeded, even for a moment. Nothing would have been left to

chance. Every detail of his story would have been checked up and verified without the slightest delay.

"Wake up your friend," said Hartmann, finally. "We descend now. This is a naval Zeppelin, and down below there, on the island, is our base. When we land I will confirm what you have told me of your names and your homes. Then when everything is regular, I will try to arrange for you to reach Dusseldorf. But I do not know how soon that will be possible."

"It does not matter," said Karl, quietly. "We would serve the fatherland in Dusseldorf, were we home. Perhaps there will be work for us here, some way in which even boys may be useful. We are scouts, Heinrich and I—Pfadfinder."

"So? That is well. That is a good movement. Even an Englishman may think of a good thing, it seems. And Baden-Powell is a good soldier, though what he did against the Boers was no more than any one of thousands of our officers could have done. They are good fighters, those

English, but poor soldiers. In the beginning of a war they are no good. But if the war lasts long enough they grow stronger, instead of weaker. They fought well with us at Waterloo."

Then while Hartmann superintended the descent of the great airship, which had hung in a great circle to get into the proper position, Karl awakened Heinrich, who had slept soundly while Karl had his view of the fleets, or rather the small squadrons, that had been in sight. Heinrich's capacity for sleep was as great as his appetite. He was vastly astonished now to discover where they were, and to look down and see the warships, so quiet, and yet so grim and formidable. But he had other sensations.

"Don't they eat breakfast on a Zeppelin?" he complained. "I am hungry, Karl! Did you eat yours and let me sleep? If you did I shall never forgive you!"

Karl roared at him.

"You see for the first time the most wonderful sight in the world," he exclaimed, "and yet you

can think only of breakfast! A fine soldier you would make, Heinrich! If you were in battle you would want the fighting stopped while you ate your dinner."

"No," said Heinrich, seriously. "I shouldn't want that at all. If there is anything to do, I can always wait for my meals. But when it does no good for me to wait, I get hungry, and I like to eat regularly three times a day."

"And once or twice over, for good measure!" scoffed Karl. "Well, we shall have breakfast when we land, I expect. And that will be very soon."

It was fascinating to watch the work of bringing the great airship to its mooring. Graceful and easy to handle as the Zeppelins are when they are once well launched into their own element, they become cranky and difficult, even dangerous, when they are required to land. But Hartmann managed the planes that raise or lower the great gas bags with consummate skill, and the engines seemed to respond as surely as the motor of a

modern automobile. The engines, of course, are practically the same in a Zeppelin as in a motor car, except that they are infinitely more powerful.

And so at last, with scarcely a jar, the great ship came to rest upon the earth. Men had been ready below to seize the mooring ropes, and these were tied to great staples. The lessons of the early Zeppelins and their disasters had been well learned. In the days of experimenting more than one ship had been torn away from her moorings by a sudden squall. But now it would take a cyclone to send one of the Zeppelins adrift. Before them, as they looked up from the ground to which they descended, loomed a great shed or hangar, as the sheds of airships are called, but into this the ship was not to go at once. Karl felt that this meant that she might set out soon again, but he asked no questions.

They had their breakfast, an excellent one, too, for war time, and on an island where rations were reduced, not for lack of opportunity to revictual, but because the island was so small that literally

every inch of room was needed. And then they waited until Hartmann, smiling, came to them.

"I knew it!" he said. "Your story is verified in every detail."

## CHAPTER VII

### ACTIVE SERVICE

The island of Helgoland, in time of war, was a curious place. Karl and Heinrich, as they soon discovered, appeared to be the only civilians on the island. It was purely a military spot. Its fortifications were powerful in the extreme. A huge wireless plant dominated one side of the island, the great masts and aerials of the Telefunken system rising high into the air. Every man they saw seemed to be busy. There was no confusion; each knew exactly what he was to do, and went about his work quietly and methodically. It was an extraordinary example of efficiency.

"One would never think Germany was at war," said Heinrich.

"It is because we have been ready," said Karl, proudly. "We did not want war, but we knew that it might come at any moment. That is why

everything is so orderly here. We are not like the French. In France there was confusion and excitement. We didn't see how it was at home, of course, but I believe it was all much more like this."

"I wonder how long we shall stay here, Karl? Will they send us home, do you think?"

"I don't know. I wish there was something for us to do. We might be useful here, I should think. Let us go over to the wireless station. Wait—I will ask Captain Hartmann first if we may go."

"Why not?" said Hartmann, cheerfully, when they made their request. "We found out things about you two that you did not tell us. Your families are serving the fatherland, as your ancestors have done. But why are you interested in wireless?"

"We know a little of it already," said Karl. "We know the code and have used telegraph instruments. But we have never seen a really great wireless plant working before."

"So?" Hartmann seemed to be unduly interested. "What do you know of wireless? Have you ever operated the instruments?"

"Yes, Herr Hauptmann. We built stations on the roofs of our houses near Dusseldorf. We live about two miles apart, Heinrich and I, and we rigged up our plant about a year ago. It has always worked well, though it is a low-powered one, and we have a radius of only a few miles."

"Yet the principle is the same," mused Hartmann. "You wish to serve, do you not? If you understand wireless it may be that we can find work for you to do. I do not see how you are to be sent at once to Dusseldorf, in any case. If you must stay, you may as well make yourselves useful."

"There is nothing we should like better, Herr Hauptmann," said Heinrich, enthusiastically.

"Wait, then, until I speak to the commandant. I will see what he says. Perhaps I can arrange for you to have some lessons in the Telefunken station here."

They waited impatiently for his return.

"Come with me," he said. "Captain von Schoenberg of the Imperial Navy wishes to question you."

Hartmann, it seemed, had already made a report of what Karl had noted down while they were still in France, immediately after the outbreak of war. Now Captain von Schoenberg examined them in more detail.

"Gut—sehr gut! Very good!" he said. "You kept your eyes open. I shall have the information you have brought sent by wireless to headquarters. Meanwhile Captain Hartmann tells me that you are anxious to be of further service, and that you already know something of wireless. Report to Sergeant Schmidt, now in charge of the Telefunken station. He will test your knowledge and, as far as time permits, give you instruction."

They were delighted. And within five minutes they were in the little house where the delicate recording and transmitting instruments of the wireless outfit were located. This house was carefully

protected from stray shots in case of a bombardment. But, as Schmidt pointed out to them, that would be of little avail in case of a real attack.

"They'd shoot away the aerials," he said. "But then, when they had gone, those could be easily replaced, while the instruments here could not."

Schmidt himself was busy at this moment. Three operators were always on duty, day and night. One sat constantly with the telephone-like receiving instrument over his ears. In this the murmurs of the aerials were translated. The faint sound that came over the wires was magnified, and the operator charged with this duty thus picked up the messages. The operators worked in relays, naturally, and now one who was off duty for three hours was delegated by Schmidt to explain the workings of the plant to the two boys. He took them to the dynamo whence came the power to operate the plant, and showed them the batteries which, in emergency, would supply current for several hours.

"It's the same as our plant, only ever so much bigger," said Heinrich. "I think it is easy to understand."

Schmidt, they soon learned, had his orders regarding them. In a little while he called to them.

"Send this message, if you can," he said, to Karl. "Take my place here at the key."

For a moment Karl studied the code words, which had no meaning for him. Then he adjusted another receiving instrument over his ears, and, throwing open his switch, began tapping his key.

"K-L, K-L, K-L." As he tapped the key the great spark crashed out overhead, and he knew that the mysterious waves of sound were being sent through the air in all directions. He knew, too, that only the stations specially tuned up to receive waves of the particular length that were being sent out would receive the call, and that only the station at Kiel would answer. Soon the answer came. He glanced over at the other listening operator.

"All right! That is their private signal," this

man nodded, as an explanation to the boys.

And then, with a sure, quick touch, Karl began tapping out the code words on the paper that Schmidt had handed him. Schmidt and the others watched, approval expressed in their smiles. Karl made no mistakes, and he sent the message quickly and confidently. When it was done he waited for the message to be repeated, checking it off by his written paper.

"Sehr gut!" said Schmidt, then. "You send like a veteran, youngster! I shall report that there is nothing we can teach you. You are fit to take your place here as an operator to-day."

"As for the other? We have not tried him," said one of the other operators.

"Let me try, too," said Heinrich.

"Yes, it is your turn, now," said Schmidt, smiling at his eagerness. "Here is a message for you to send."

Heinrich met the test as well as Karl had done. Indeed, he was, if anything, even quicker and more perfect than Karl. Heinrich had unusual

mechanical ability. His hands were able to turn to many sorts of work by sheer instinct as it seemed, though in everything that involved brain work and clear thinking Karl took the lead when they were doing something together.

Hartmann came in after a time, to see how they had fared. He was delighted by Schmidt's report.

"I shall win a medal yet for having picked you up back there in France!" he said, happily. "Come, then. I am going away soon. I shall leave you with a brother officer who will care for you properly."

"You are going in the airship?" asked Heinrich. "Can't we go with you, Herr Hauptmann?"

"Not on this journey, my boy," said Hartmann, with a smile. "It is too dangerous. And every man of my crew has his work to do. Unless there was great need of you it would be impossible. In such a trip every extra pound of weight is counted. Nothing can be taken, neither man nor supplies that is not absolutely needed. When-

ever we get rid of a little excess weight we add more petrol to the tanks."

"You are going on a long journey?" said Heinrich. "Where?"

"That I cannot tell you," said Hartmann, with a smile. "It is a secret. But if we come back you shall know—you and all Germany. All the world shall know then!"

"Ask no questions like that again, Heinrich," said Karl, in a low voice. "We are here only on sufferance. We are civilians, remember, and in times of war it is the business of civilians not to ask questions or to get in the way in any fashion."

"I'll remember," said Heinrich, flushing a little. "I asked without thinking."

The sun was still shining brightly. But now, as they looked out to sea, they saw a haze. Hartmann sniffed the air; he lifted a moistened finger to test the wind, and then looked at the flags that hung from the fortifications.

"Fog coming!" he said. "That is good! That will be helpful. We have to fight might with guile

in these first days. The fog will help us greatly."

He left them in a few minutes, after having introduced them to Lieutenant Mannheim, who was to take charge of them while they remained on the island. Mannheim, too, had noticed the coming fog.

"Good fortune, Franz!" he said to Hartmann. "You will ride away in the fog."

"We shall soon rise above it," said Hartmann. "The sun will shine upon us, but below the fog there will be those who would give much to see through it. Ah! They may guess that we are above, but while the fog lasts they cannot know! Even the weather fights for the fatherland, my friend, this day!"

Then, still without noise, without confusion of any sort, the Zeppelin was prepared for departure. Her crew went to their stations; the commandant held a last brief interview with Hartmann, who saluted finally, and took his place in the car. Then the propellers began to turn; the whirring of the powerful Diesel engines sounded

on the quiet air, and in a minute the great cigar-shaped airship rose slowly, majestically, from the ground and climbed into the air. There was no cheering. This was war; it was grim business, deadly work, that the Zeppelin had to do. Once well in the air, she circled once or twice. Then her course was taken, and she flew off to the northwest. Soon her silver sides, shining in the sun, were merged in the sky, as she rose higher and higher. And it was not long before she had utterly disappeared.

"God send that they come back safe and successful!" said Lieutenant Mannheim, soberly. And the two boys echoed his wish. That great cruiser of the air had saved them the night before when they had seemed certain to be captured. Had it not appeared in that wonderful and timely fashion, they would now be prisoners in France. Perhaps their imprisonment might already have ended. They would have been classed as spies, despite their youth. And in war there is short shrift for spies.

"The fog is coming in swiftly," said Heinrich. "Look, Karl!"

It was true. It was more than a mist now. It was a regular North Sea fog, thick and opaque. And now Captain von Schoenberg came up to them.

"I have sent for the *Koenigin Luise,*" he said. "It means haste, but it is too good a chance to lose. Even if she has not her full equipment, it is the time of all times for her to set to work. She should go far in such weather! But I wonder if she will be ready. The accident of last week may have made a difference."

Karl and Heinrich listened. They did not understand.

## CHAPTER VIII

### VOLUNTEERS ACCEPTED

Late that afternoon, when wraithlike streamers of mist were all about the island, and the sea had nearly been blotted out by the fog that was still creeping in on them, Karl and Heinrich were on the dock, watching the school of submarines that lay waiting for the word to go out.

"Here comes a vessel," said Heinrich. "Look, Karl! Is she not like a yacht?"

"It is the *Koenigin Luise,*" said Karl, after a moment. He studied the long, dark gray ship closely. She did not look much like the luxurious cruising yacht in which, two summers before, he had gone with his family for a cruise in the Norwegian fjords. She had still her yacht-like bow. But her rails were gone; all the hamper of the pleasure ship had been stripped away, and she looked stern and warlike, typifying, indeed, the sudden change that war had brought to all

Germany, and to many other European countries.

"Of what use is she? She is not meant for fighting, is she?" asked Heinrich.

"No. But she is of some use, or she would not be here. Well, if it is intended that we shall know, we shall find out in due time, I suppose. She is very swift. There are many things, I think, that she might do. She might be sent out on a scouting expedition in the fog."

In the harbor of Helgoland there is deep water to the very edge of the docks. So now the converted liner came up and was moored within a stone's throw of where the two boys stood. They could see her decks, swarming with men. On each side of the superstructure small guns were mounted—quick firing six and nine pounders, as they both recognized. And in her bow was a heavier gun, a 4.7 rifle, capable of destroying a torpedo-boat destroyer with a single shot.

No sooner had the vessel been tied up than her crew and a number of men on the dock burst into life. From a warehouse great bell-shaped things

were brought, and these were hoisted aboard the ship by a steam crane. Karl gave a cry of understanding.

"Mines!" he said. "We are stupid, Heinrich! Of course, it is to lay mines that she will go out in the fog. Each of those mines is powerful enough to destroy a battleship. It is so that we must fight that great English fleet, in the beginning at least. While our big ships stay in harbor, at Cuxhaven, at Kiel, at Wilhelmshaven, their fleet must keep the sea. And it will be a sea full of hidden perils. Some ships will strike mines. Others our submarines will find and sink. And so, if God is with us, we shall even matters in the end. We shall be able to fight them on even terms and beat them. Ship for ship and man for man, I believe our fleet is better than theirs. But all that we have spent on our army they have been able to devote to their navy."

"It does not seem fair—to strike from behind, to give them no chance to fight back," said Heinrich. "I wish that our fleet might sail out

and beat them in a battle in the open sea."

"It is as fair to strike them as we must do as for them to send three ships against our one!" said Karl, hotly. "They have always been afraid to run the risk of meeting us openly. They fight and plan in one way, and we in another. Time will tell which has been right. But do not say it is not fair. War is not a game, Heinrich. Each nation fights to win, by any means."

Heinrich seemed to be silenced, if he was not convinced. For a time they watched with fascination the work of equipping the *Koenigin Luise* with the engines of destruction she was to sow broadcast. Here again everything seemed to have been planned long in advance. Every man knew what he had to do, and did it without fuss or delay. Dull and prosaic as this particular work seemed, it was fascinating just because it had been so well planned. But they were interrupted in their gazing at the busy scene by the sudden appearance of an orderly.

"Captain von Schoenberg desires to see you at

once in his office," said the man, saluting them as if they had been officers, to Heinrich's ill concealed delight.

"We will come at once," said Karl, and they followed him. It was beginning to grow dark now; the fog, now very dense, had shortened the twilight.

They found Captain von Schoenberg with a young man in the uniform of a naval commander.

"Here are the boys I spoke of, Commander Schraft," said the captain. "They are anxious to serve the fatherland. You will find them fully able to use the wireless and willing to obey. If they are young, that makes them no less anxious to do their part. I dare not spare any of my men here."

"They will suit me excellently," said Schraft, after a quick glance at them. "It is regrettable that they must be asked to share our danger, but—"

"I will explain," said the captain, turning to the puzzled boys. "A few days ago there was an

accident on the *Koenigin Luise.* Her wireless operators were injured. She is about to sail from here on a mine laying expedition that will carry her to the British coast. It is of the greatest importance that a report be made instantly, by wireless, of the exact position of every mine that is laid. If this were not done, our own ships might strike them by accident. Are you willing to undertake this service?"

"Gladly!" cried both boys, in one breath.

Both the naval officers smiled at their enthusiasm. But Captain von Schoenberg was grave.

"The risk is considerable," he said. "The British ships are everywhere. Our aerial scouts have brought us some knowledge of them, but there is always the danger of an encounter. Were the situation not very grave, I should not allow you to go. You have a duty to your parents. Knowing all the danger, are you still willing to go?"

"Our first duty is to the fatherland," said Karl. "Our fathers are serving with their regiments.

Were they here to advise us, they would tell us to go."

"There speaks the German spirit!" cried Schraft. "I will try to guard them, Captain. It is as you say. The need is very great. We must take advantage of this fog. If we could wait—but we cannot. And it is vital that the reports be sent by wireless. If we are sunk or captured, our mine chart goes with us—save that the enemy will never find it."

"Very well," said von Schoenberg. "I give my consent. May God be with you and bring success to your work!"

From the stores the boys were supplied with heavy woolen underwear and with thick clothes.

"On board we wear such clothes always, day and night," said Schraft. "In these waters the sea is very cold. It is necessary, in case of accident, to be warmly clad, for otherwise a man would die before even quick help could reach him. And in our work there is always the danger of disaster. We may meet and be sunk by a stronger

ship; a torpedo may strike us; we may hit one of the British mines."

Neither Karl nor Heinrich was frightened. They were too delighted with the chance to serve their country, as everyone they had seen since the memorable moment in which Captain Hartmann had saved them in France was serving it. They had never dared to hope for such good fortune. They were not to fight, but they understood that they were to be as useful, at the very least, as any fighting man could be.

Suddenly, as they walked together toward the ship, Heinrich laughed aloud.

"What's the joke, Heinrich?" asked Karl.

"I am just thinking that had it not been for an Englishman we should not have this chance to work against England!" said Karl. "It is because we were Boy Scouts that we learned telegraphy. We both did it to win an honor badge, Karl, you remember."

"That's so! It is strange, isn't it? And it was an Englishman, as you say, who started the Boy

Scouts. I wonder if the scouts in France and England are working for their countries, too?"

"I suppose so, Karl. And at home, in Dusseldorf? What of Oscar von Slegel and the rest?"

"We can only guess, Heinrich. But I know that they will do what they can, at least, whether it is much or little. Perhaps they can help to care for the wounded, and do many things that are necessary and that would take a man away from the front if a scout did not do them."

"So even boys can help, Karl! I never was so proud of being a German before! I believe the whole nation has rallied at the call to arms. Men, women, children—we are all behind our Kaiser! What if we have to fight the whole world? We can do it, for there is no country so united."

"Prussia fought half of Europe—more than half of Europe—once before. Frederick the Great beat France and Russia and Austria, and he had only Prussia, not all of what is now Germany. Saxony was against him, and Bavaria. And now, with all Germany united, and Austria on

our side, why shouldn't we win?'' he concluded.

When they reached the *Koenigin Luise* they found that in a few moments everything would be ready for departure into the fog. All the mines were on board; a few stores only remained to be brought. They were taken at once to the wireless cabin.

''You will take the work in turns,'' said Schraft, changed, somehow, from the genial enthusiast they had first seen. His face was stern and set now. He was on duty. ''While one works, the other will sleep. You will remain in this room. There is a sofa on which the one who is off duty can sleep. Your meals will be brought to you here. Always you must be ready. Without permission you will not leave the cabin. Men will be waiting always to carry messages.''

He was about to leave the cabin. Then he turned.

''Any message that you receive or intercept is to be brought to me immediately, at any hour,'' he ordered. ''If, by chance, I am asleep, I am to

be awakened." His face lightened, and there was the faintest suggestion of a smile. "But I shall not sleep," he added, simply. "There will be too much for me to do."

"Then we are to listen for every message that comes?" said Karl. "Whether it is addressed to us or not?"

"Everything," said Schraft. "Without exception. The messages that are of the greatest importance are those that we shall catch by accident, if we have good fortune. You know the call —L U?"

"Yes, sir."

"Very well. In five minutes we shall start. Test your instruments now with the land station. After that call Kiel and Cuxhaven, to see that the range is right. Soon I shall give you messages to be sent to the staff at Kiel."

The installation was in perfect order. That much they proved at once, and without difficulty. Scarcely had they finished their test with Kiel when the vessel began to shake. The powerful

engines, so vast in proportion to the comparatively small size of the vessel herself, were at work, and they knew that the voyage had begun.

For an hour they were busy with the sending of the messages that were brought to them from Commander Schraft. Answers came. And then for a time there was nothing for them to do. Karl sat at the desk, listening intently. In his ear there was a faint buzz, like the sound that may be heard in a telephone. Static electricity was disturbing the sensitive antennae that stretched between the masts high above their heads. Sometimes the flickering sounds seemed to have some meaning. But in a moment he knew that it was only the mysterious static. And then, sharp and distinct, a new sound beat in his ears. A message was coming through. But the code was strange and unfamiliar! He was listening to an English ship!

## CHAPTER IX

### IN THE FOG

As the mysterious symbols came through the air, to be caught by the delicate web above and so brought, magnified a hundred times, to his very ears, Karl wrote them down. Beneath his hand, as he looked at them, they seemed to make a meaningless jumble of letters. But it was not his business to think of that. He had only to write down the message, whatever its meaning might be, and send it as soon as he had it all, to Commander Schraft. As he took down the symbols, too, he called them out to Heinrich.

"Take all this down," he called. "Then we shall have a way of checking it off, later."

In a few minutes the air was silent again, save for the flickering of the static electricity, and he called the seaman who stood by the door of the cabin, and sent the result of what he had overheard to the commander. In a few moments

Schraft joined them, the message in his hand.

"This is exact?" he said, pointing to the paper.

"Yes, sir. It was in code—"

"That does them little good, those English," said Schraft, showing his teeth in a broad smile. "Bah! What stupidity! They have not even had the sense yet to change their code from that which their ships used in peace! That code we have possessed for six months—we got it two days after they adopted it, when they learned that we had obtained a copy of the former one."

Karl said nothing.

"What you have just enabled me to learn was most important," said Schraft, after a moment's study. "Let nothing escape you."

He glanced at his watch.

"We must be passing now through the furthest line of the British fleet," he said. "In three hours we shall be among their big ships—the battleships and the battle cruisers. If we get through that line safely, we shall never stop until we are in the mouth of the Thames! We shall plant a

crop there!'' With that he turned and left them.

They did not see him again that night. And, though they were supposed to stand watch and watch, both boys were too excited to be able to sleep. Through the windows, they could see that the night was amazingly black, naturally a favorable condition for the work the *Koenigin Luise* had to do. When the door was opened, the fog came in, filling the room with its chilly dampness, but they exulted in that.

''If only the fog holds!'' said Heinrich. ''It is a great thing to think that we can slip through their whole fleet, isn't it, Karl?''

''Yes, but we haven't done it yet,'' said Karl, dryly. ''Don't let us count our chickens before they're hatched, Heinrich. It is no easy task. Commander Schraft will deserve well of Germany if he accomplishes it. To mine the mouth of the Thames! Why, even if this ship is lost, she will have done more effective work than half a dozen battleships of the first class could hope to accomplish.''

It was after midnight before there was more work for them to do.

First came Schraft.

"Tune up your instruments," he directed. "We are in tune with the British now. And for the messages we are to send there must be no chance of their detecting our code as we did theirs."

So Karl and Heinrich, with the assistance of a mechanic, changed the length of the waves that their sender would produce. The pitch of their sender was altered, and now only a receiving station specially prepared would be able to understand. On the new pitch Heinrich, whose turn at the key it now was, called Helgoland by way of a test. The answer came at once.

"So!" said Karl, with a smile. "If the English stations pick that up, it will sound like static to them."

And now, for two hours, the wireless was busy indeed. Every few minutes there came another report to be sent. And each told of the laying of

a mine, and gave its exact position. With these reports an officer in Helgoland, supplied with a chart, could mark the position of every mine that was laid, and this would be supplied to every German warship.

Morning came, but not until both Karl and Heinrich, taking turns, had managed to sleep for an hour. Through their windows they could see the gradual breaking of the darkness. But they could see, too, that the fog persisted. There was scarcely a breath of air, and the thick mist hung on. It was a yellowish gray in color, and so heavy that it looked like pea soup. It seemed to be solid, indeed.

Schraft, bearing the traces of his sleepless vigil in his eyes, came to them just before their breakfast was brought.

"We are through the main body of the English fleet—well through," he said. "In two hours more we will have laid our last mine, if all goes well. Then the fog may lift, if it likes! I don't care what happens when our work is done, though

I should like to bring my ship back safely. But my orders are not to fight. It was expected that we should be captured. And yet I have known such fogs in these waters to last three days. If this one will only stay, we shall be back at Helgoland before the British even know that we have visited them."

Eerie and mysterious were the daylight hours—far more so than those of darkness. Now, all about them, there were signs that they were in waters thickly populated. Sometimes the deep boom of a foghorn came to them. Once or twice dim shapes of other ships loomed up. But a master hand was guiding the *Koenigin Luise* that day. Again and again detention seemed certain. But each time the danger passed. Every few minutes, one of the boys still sent out a wireless report of the laying of another mine.

And at last Schraft came to them again. He was smiling at last.

"Send this message," he said. "Say that the last mine is laid, and that we are home-

ward bound. We have completed our mission."

Suddenly there was a dull roar. For a moment the fog was split and they could see the thick, oily water. But then the fog closed down again. Shrieks and cries rose from the sea. Astonished and awed, the boys stared at Schraft. Then came another explosion, but one of a different sort this time, sharper, louder.

"One of our mines was planted in the right spot," said Schraft, coolly. "It has done its work. You understand now how they work? A contact mine explodes when a ship touches it. The explosion, if it is a warship that has struck, detonates the powder magazine. That is why it is more dangerous for a warship to strike such a mine than for a merchantman. Here, send this report!"

He sat down and hastily wrote a report. His hand did not shake. Seemingly he was scarcely excited by the disaster that had occurred so suddenly near them.

"Can we not rescue some of the crew of the

ship that struck?" Heinrich ventured to ask, in awestruck tones.

Schraft's eyes were full of pity, all at once. But he shook his head.

"I have not the right to do that," he said. "I should like to. It tears my heart to think of the brave men dying in the water. But my duty is to the fatherland. I must save my ship first. Even were that a German ship, we should have to steam away. Listen, my boys! Do you know what the order is if ships are attacked by a submarine?"

They were silent.

"If one ship is struck and is sinking, all the others must run away at full speed!" he said. "It seems inhuman, heartless, but it is not. It is the stern, hard rule of war. For other ships to go to help the one that was attacked first would be to invite further attack. It is the rule in every navy—or it should be. Hard as it is, it is necessary."

Then he left them. Both boys were sobered by the tragedy that had visited the hidden waters

near them with such startling suddenness. What had actually happened they could only guess. But it took no vivid imagination to do that. What they had heard had told them all they needed to know. And now Karl, going to the window, was startled to feel a puff of air in his face.

"Heinrich!" he said. "I feel a breath of wind!"

"There is usually wind at sea, Karl. That is nothing wonderful."

"No. But do you know what it means? If there is wind, the fog will be driven away. If the wind does come, we shall soon be in the open sea, where all the British ships can see us!"

They stared at one another. And, unmistakably now, the fog was growing lighter.

There was a sudden stir about the decks of the ship. Karl, looking out, saw that the lifeboats were being made ready for quick launching. The men were at quarters. And now the *Koenigin Luise* began to throb more violently. Plainly she was to be crowded; Schraft meant to get as far

as possible from where they were before the fog lifted.

"Why are we going faster?" asked Heinrich.

"I suppose because it is likely that there will be other vessels going to the aid of the one that was blown up," said Karl. "I think we're in for it, Heinrich. I don't know what will happen, but surely there will be plenty of excitement if the fog lifts and we are in the midst of English ships!"

"We won't have a chance," said Heinrich, cheerfully. "I wonder if they'll sink us or capture us?"

"I don't know," said Karl. "Try your wireless—we may have a message to send any minute, I think."

The spark crashed out; in a moment Heinrich nodded.

"It's all right," he said. "They answer. Karl, I wonder when we'll get back to Dusseldorf. If we're lucky, we'll be prisoners in England before night, I think. If not—"

And then it suddenly grew lighter. The fog was vanishing mysteriously. Looking out, Karl saw a shape looming up in the fog as the banks of mist grew thin. In a moment he could make it out.

"It's a lightship!" he cried. "I can see her plainly! We must have been terribly close!"

From the decks there came a sudden roar of cheering. And in the same moment Schraft came in. His eyes were like pools of fire, and his face was flushed with delight.

"Tell the station at Helgoland that the British battleship *Cymbria* has struck one of the mines we laid, and is sinking fast!" he ordered. "And that the fog is clearing away and that there seems to be no chance for us to escape, but that all our mines are planted. Then leave your key. You had better come on deck, to be ready if anything happens!"

He disappeared, and in a moment Heinrich was sending out the news that, within a few hours, would be cheered by the anxious crowds watching

the bulletins in Berlin, in Hamburg, in their own Dusseldorf. A British dreadnaught! The *Koenigin Luise* was a small price to pay for such a prize!

Then when the message had been sent, the two boys gladly obeyed the order to go to the decks. Scarcely a trace of the fog was left now, and as they raced out they saw the great battleship sinking, nearly two miles away. All about her were smaller vessels, and others, light cruisers, with two or three destroyers, were steaming toward them. Even as they looked, they heard a dull roar, and saw one of the cruisers list sharply. Then a column of black smoke spurted up amidships, and she crumpled and seemed to go to pieces.

"Another mine!" cried Karl. "Her men should be safe, though. Yes, the others are stopping to pick them up. We have a chance yet—that will check the pursuit!"

The *Koenigin Luise* was racing northward now, away from the British ships. But just as there

seemed a chance that she might escape, she shook violently. And out of the water near by rose a black shape.

"A submarine—and she's hit us with a torpedo!" cried an officer. "Out with the boats!"

## CHAPTER X

### THE RESCUE FROM THE SEA

"They gave us no chance! They did not even ask if we would surrender!" cried Heinrich, angrily. "We were not going to fight—"

"What chance did our mines give the two ships they have sunk?" said Karl. "What they have done is as fair as what we did when we planted our mines. We took our chance, as they did—as all must, in war."

But there was little time for speech. Already the *Koenigin Luise* was sinking fast. And now, while they watched the preparations that were being made for launching the boats, there came a second and more terrible explosion. It was the boilers. Water had come in too swiftly through the great hole the torpedo had torn in the liner's side to prevent that disaster. Karl and Heinrich were both lifted from their feet by the force of the explosion. The next moment they were struggling

for their lives in the icy water of the North Sea.

By some miracle neither was hurt. Karl was a magnificent swimmer. He came up almost at once, and a little distance away he saw Heinrich, swimming in circles, as if he were dazed—as, indeed, there was good reason for him to be. All about them other men were struggling in the water, making for bits of driftwood and wreckage. He swam as quickly as he could, hampered as he was by his heavy clothing, toward his chum. In a moment he was able to make Heinrich hear him.

"To your left—swim to your left, Heinrich!" he cried. "There is something there that we can cling to. We will be picked up soon—there are two destroyers coming up very fast."

Heinrich understood, and they were soon together again, clinging desperately to a spar, that gave them a precarious foothold. The sea was calm after the fog of the last twenty-four hours, but it was beginning to get rougher, with the rising wind. And the sea is never wholly calm in an open seaway, of course; on a river or lake the

water into which the crew of the *Koenigin Luise* had been plunged would have been regarded as more than rough.

It was intensely cold.

"I'm certainly glad they made us wear these heavy clothes," said Karl, his teeth chattering. "We'd freeze without them!"

"If they're going to rescue us, I wish they'd hurry up about it," said Heinrich. "Will they save many, I wonder?"

"The submarine has picked up some already," said Karl. "See? She is far from us, though. We must wait until the destroyers come up."

And although it seemed like hours as they clung to the spar in the icy water, it was really only a few minutes before they were dragged up into a small boat. Half a dozen others were with them, but all of them had fainted from exhaustion. They were men who had found no support, but had been obliged to keep afloat as best they could, and for them help had come just in time.

On the destroyer they were huddled below

decks as soon as they boarded her, and sternly bidden to keep still. Though the English sailors had no mind to neglect the work of rescue, it was plain they were angry because of the disasters these German prisoners had caused.

And, as a matter of fact, the rescued men did not fare badly. It was warm below decks on the destroyer, and it was warmth that they chiefly craved. It was not long before an officer appeared.

"This isn't any hotel," he said, with a touch of bitterness in his voice, "but we'll do the best we can for you until we get you ashore. That'll be in an hour or so—if we don't strike one of your mines."

"I hope you will!" cried one German sailor. "What if it costs us our lives? It will bring the day nearer!"

The Englishman smiled, but he made no answer. Karl and Heinrich wondered a little that the man was not punished. After all, the Englishman was an officer, and entitled to respectful treatment. But they said little. In spite of their narrow

escape and the excitement of the whole swift episode, both were beginning to give way to a feeling of depression that was the inevitable reaction. They thought of Commander Schraft and the many others who were not among those they saw around them. What had happened to them?

"I hope the commander was saved," whispered Karl. "It would be too sad to think that he could never return to receive the praise that he should have for sinking at least two of the British ships."

"He may be on another destroyer or on the submarine," said Heinrich. "I hope so."

They could see nothing. They could only stand, huddled close with half a hundred other rescued men, in a close and stifling prison, which soon began to have a disagreeable and overpowering smell as the wet clothes dried out. But in a few minutes the rapid throbbing of the engines, vibrating through the thin hull of the destroyer, told them that she was moving.

"We shall be in England soon," said Karl. He

smiled sadly. "I wonder when we shall get away! Dusseldorf is a long way from us now, Heinrich!"

"Perhaps we can escape," said Heinrich. "I should like to do that, Karl, to show these English that they cannot hold us."

"There might be a chance, Heinrich," said Karl, brightening a little. "English we can speak, and nearly as well as an Englishman, I believe. We are both better at their tongue than at French."

"You mean that if we could get away from wherever they imprison us, there would be a chance for us to escape recapture? Yes. I wonder where they will take us?"

"To a camp somewhere, I think. Listen, Heinrich. If we could get away, we might be of some use. If we were to pretend that we had been taken on the *Koenigin Luise* against our will, they might treat us differently. Do you see? We might learn many things in England, and, if we could get away to tell them, who knows what we might not accomplish?"

But they were not allowed to make any more plans. All the prisoners were ordered up on deck, and when they reached the deck they found themselves in a harbor and close to a dock. Karl thought he recognized the town as Harwich, but he was not quite sure. The prisoners were marched up a narrow gangplank to the dock, and a squad of soldiers surrounded them. And then the destroyer turned and was off again.

It was evident that news of the disaster to the British ships caused by the mines they had planted had already spread, for as they were marched, guarded by the soldiers, from the dock and into a waterfront street, the Germans faced a jeering, angry crowd. Only the presence of the soldiers saved the prisoners from rough handling. And Karl was not sorry, for one, when they came to a great gate, through which they marched into a courtyard.

"For the time you will stay here," said an English officer, speaking in German. "Later on you will be taken to other quarters. You will be

guarded here, of course, and I need not say that any man who attempts to escape will be shot instantly."

Here, though they were still prisoners, there was room for all, and there was also plenty of fresh air, in welcome contrast to the stuffiness of their quarters on the destroyer that had belied her name by rescuing all of them from death in the sea. Most of the men were sullen and dispirited. They resented bitterly the idea of being captives. There were no officers among them; it was plain that any who had been rescued must have been brought ashore in other vessels.

"Most of these men are not navy sailors," said Karl. "At least that's the way it seems to me. If they were, they'd be more cheerful, because they'd know that this was what was to be expected."

"I suppose they're the men who were the crew of the *Koenigin Luise* when she was a pleasure cruiser," suggested Heinrich. "Don't all of the merchant sailors belong to the reserve?"

"Yes, they do, of course. And they'd naturally be the men for this sort of service. They weren't supposed to man guns and fight. I wish I knew where Commander Schraft was! I hope he is safe."

"I think he had as good a chance as anyone else, Karl. He would have wanted to be the last to leave the ship, of course, if she had sunk in the ordinary way. But she didn't. If everyone was pitched into the water the way we were, there wasn't much choice for anyone about going first or last. We must all have gone together. And if that's so, I think he ought to have been picked up, because that English submarine was near where he and most of the other officers were."

Then there was an interruption to their talk. An officer appeared, and the prisoners were mustered into lines. The officer walked swiftly down the lines, and here and there told some man whom he saw had suffered some wound or injury, to fall out. These men, Karl guessed, would be sent to a hospital. When the officer came to them

he stopped, staring at them in amazement.

"My word!" he said. "You're only boys! Here, fall out! We won't put you in with the men. Your mothers might write to the *Times* about it if we did!"

Hotly as they resented the sneer, there was nothing for them to do but obey, while the English soldiers who overheard snickered. Soon they saw the men who had not been hurt drawn up into a column and marched out through the gate.

"Now, then," said the officer, returning to them, "what were you doing on board the *Koenigin Luise,* eh? Stowaways? Trying to see something of war?"

Inspiration came to Karl in that moment. He nudged Heinrich, and hung his head, sheepishly. He did not speak, but there was confession in his look.

"I thought so!" said the officer, good-naturedly. "Well, you've had a narrow escape, my lads, and a sharp lesson, I hope. I'll send you to London with a batch of civilian prisoners. They'll look

after you up there. A military detention camp is no place for boys."

It went against the grain for Karl to deceive even an enemy, but he knew that he must not let such scruples weigh with him if there was a chance to make it easier for them to escape. He was glad that Heinrich had played up to him and had not blurted out the truth. Karl himself, indeed, had been sorely tempted to do that, for he was proud, and with good reason, of the really important part he and his chum had played in the great exploit of Commander Schraft and the lost *Koenigin Luise*.

"We're not fighting with children," the Englishman went on. "You'll go to London as civil prisoners, and if you behave yourselves you'll have nothing to complain of. Briggs!"

"Yes, sir!" said a corporal, advancing with a salute.

"Take these two boys to the station. Turn them over with my compliments to Lieutenant Palmer. They're to be delivered in London as non-combatant alien enemies."

"Yes, sir!" said Briggs, saluting again. "Now then, my lads! Forward march! Get a move on!"

Many curious glances followed them as they walked through the streets of Harwich toward the railway station. But there were no hostile demonstrations, such as had been threatened when they had passed through the same streets in company with the captured sailors.

"We're in luck, Heinrich," said Karl, in German. "We might have been sent somewhere else, where we would have had no chance. Don't try to get away, no matter how good a chance there seems to be."

"Here, stow that!" said Briggs, angrily. "If you've got to talk, talk English, and mighty little of that! You can all right, because I heard you talkin' to the leftenant as well as if you hadn't been a couple of sausage eatin' Dutchmen!"

His words were rough, but his manner was kindly enough. And when he finally saw them aboard of the London train, he waved a cheery and friendly farewell.

## CHAPTER XI

### THE ENEMY'S COUNTRY

Karl and Heinrich found themselves in a third-class compartment of the train. In one corner sat a guard, a soldier, with a rifle thrown across his knees.

"'Ello!" he said. "More spies, eh? Well, the more the merrier, say I! Wot? Boys? My eye!"

Then he subsided. Karl and Heinrich looked around. They found that there were several others in the compartment already. Three men were unmistakably German, apparently seamen who had been taken from ships. But about another passenger there was more doubt. He was expensively dressed, and he wore a bored expression.

"My friend," he said, to the soldier, "haven't I asked you before not to call me a spy? I'm not, you know. I'm a perfectly harmless American. I'll admit that I hope the Kaiser will win this

war. But that's because I understand he's a bright man, and if he conquered England he would undoubtedly have you and the others who have landed me here shot—unless he had you boiled in oil!"

"Just as you sye, sir," said the guard, amiably. "I'll call you a Chinaman if it'll make you feel any better."

Then the American began to declaim again.

"This country is mad on the subject of spies," he said. "It sees a spy in every man who isn't an Englishman. I suppose if the war lasts long enough, it will get so that every man who doesn't drop his *aitches* will be shot at sunrise every morning in 'Yde Park."

Heinrich laughed. But Karl was looking with more attention at this man who could try to be funny while he was a prisoner. He had noticed the sharp look that the American had given both Heinrich and himself when they had been pushed into the compartment, and he had an idea that there was something forced about his gaiety and

good humor. Karl had good reason to know that there was more than a little excuse for the English fear of spies—although it was a late hour for that fear to show itself. Germany, believing that it was a country's duty to be prepared for anything that might happen, had long maintained secret agents in England. And it happened, also, that Karl knew that a good many of the ablest men employed in this sort of work were Germans who had acquired a natural disguise by becoming to a great extent Americanized through a long residence in the United States.

He wondered if this indignant American might not really be one of these spies. If so, he might have information of importance. Karl had no feeling against spies. He knew that the work of the spy, while it brings no public honor and earns rewards that must be enjoyed in secret, requires bravery of the highest order. In war the fate of the spy is a shameful and instant death. In time of peace, his own government must invariably disown him if he is caught. And Karl had heard

many stories of famous spies who had supplied the general staff in Berlin with information of the greatest value.

Therefore, when, after the train started, the American let his eyes meet Karl's fully and directly for the first time, Karl did not look away. Instead he met the other's gaze steadily and gave the barest nod, so slight that the soldier, even if he had noticed it at all, could scarcely have attached any significance to it. Karl was sure, however, that if his suspicions were correct, the American would understand. And he was not surprised, therefore, when after a little while the American changed his seat and sat down beside him.

"Hungry, son?" asked the American. "I've got some chocolate I'll share with you. They don't seem to have a dining-car on this train. I think I'll complain of the service on this road!"

He took two cakes of chocolate from his pocket, and handed one to each of the boys. Heinrich began to eat his at once, and threw away the silver paper in which it was wrapped. But Karl opened

his carefully, and, as he had half expected, found that within the tinfoil there was a thin sheet of white paper. On this he could make out writing. He thrilled at this confirmation of his guess. It was hard to read what was written there, but he managed it.

"I am a German, like you," it read. "They suspect me. I am afraid I shall not be able to get away. If you go free, send this message to the Imperial Chancellor. He will understand. The message is: 'Six seventeen forty-five one hundred and fourteen elbe.' No matter how the message reaches the Chancellor, he will know it is from me and what it means. If you understand, ask me for more chocolate."

Frank studied the writing carefully. His lips moved almost imperceptibly as he committed the numbers and the single word of the mysterious code message to memory.

"Six seventeen forty-five one hundred and fourteen elbe."

He was sure of it at last. Karl could trust his

memory. It was well trained, and his marks in the yearly examinations proved that the training had not been wasted. He slipped a look at the guard; then, rolling up the tiny fragment of tissue paper, he put it in his mouth.

"That chocolate was good!" he said, aloud. "I wish I had some more!"

"There's gratitude for you!" exclaimed the American, with a high-pitched, nervous laugh. "He eats all the chocolate I have and wants more!"

Heinrich looked curiously at Karl. He had, of course, entirely missed the byplay between Karl and the spy, as Karl now knew him to be. And it was utterly impossible for Karl to explain to him just then. Stupid the guard might be, but not stupid enough to make that possible. Karl was not anxious to talk, at any rate. He wanted to think. Now it was doubly important that he and Heinrich should escape. It was evident that the message that had been entrusted to him for delivery was of the utmost importance. In those few

cryptic numbers there might be information that would turn the scale in some vast operation.

"I will get that message through!" Karl vowed to himself. But he was obliged to admit the task was one that seemed to be beyond his power. First he must get away. He and Heinrich, that is, must get their liberty. And then, even if they were free, there remained the problem of getting out of England, since it seemed hopeless to think of sending any message from England to Germany, and especially a message in code. However, that phase of the problem was not one to worry about until they were free, for there seemed a small enough prospect of that.

The train was moving slowly, but its progress was none the less steady and sure. In a few hours, two or three at most, they would be in London. Karl had no idea what fate might be in store for them there, but he was tolerably certain that he and Heinrich would be closely watched. They might be released, but it was doubtful. And even if they were, they would be under surveillance.

"No," he said to himself. "If we get as far as London, there will be little chance. We must try to escape from the train before it reaches there."

All sorts of wild plans came into his head. He had read stories of prisoners on their way to jail who had leaped from moving trains. But his common sense told him that there would be only one chance of escape in a thousand if he resorted to such a way. Then, too, he could only do that by himself. And he was determined not even to try to escape no matter how urgent the necessity of getting the message through might be, unless Heinrich escaped with him.

One thing he could do. He saw that the soldier who was on guard was paying little attention to his prisoners. As a matter of fact, there was no reason why he should watch them with special care. Both the doors of the compartment were locked; it was almost impossible for anyone to get out, without making so much noise that detection of his effort was certain. And so Karl

was able to take Heinrich's hand in his and tap on it with one finger. His tapping was not at random; he was using the Morse code, and Heinrich understood him perfectly.

First Karl told what had happened when he had received the cake of chocolate. He carefully explained that he had a message that must be delivered.

"We must try to escape," he said, in his silent language. "If I make any move, watch me, and follow me. I will not be able to explain. You will have to try to guess what it is that I am trying to do. We must seize any chance that comes. Some trifling thing that we cannot foresee may give us our chance. Now in case you get away and I do not, I will signal the message that is to be sent to the Imperial Chancellor. Repeat it to me, to be sure that you have it properly."

He tapped out the mysterious symbols, and after a moment Heinrich repeated them, his finger beating against Karl's wrist.

"Good! Now we are ready," signalled Karl.

"How we can escape I do not know, but there must be some chance."

The train was moving very irregularly now. It seemed that the line ahead must be crowded, for they would go forward at a fair speed for a few minutes, then slow down, and then stop altogether, only to start up again. Karl guessed that troops were being moved, and, indeed, trains going in the other direction, toward the sea, confirmed his guess, for from the windows he could see that they were full of soldiers.

"Your train gets slower all the time, my friend," said the self-styled American to the soldier, presently. "We ought to have been in London an hour ago. And instead we're still in the marshes."

"You needn't mind," said the soldier, with a laugh. "You're a good sight better off than you'll be when you get to London. They'll put you in jail there, like as not."

"I doubt—"

Whatever the American was about to say was

never finished. For at that moment there was a sharp jolt; then the sides of the train seemed to collapse, and all the occupants of the compartment were thrown to the floor in a tangled heap.

"Train behind ran into us!" gasped Karl. He reached for his chum and to his delight he found that he was unhurt. The soldier was senseless, having been struck on the head.

For a moment Karl thought only of the disaster. All about them the shrieks and groans of the injured made a hideous din. But then he realized that this was the chance he had told Heinrich was sure to come. The compartment, or what was left of it, had been thrown off the tracks. In a moment he grasped Heinrich by the hand.

"Come on!" he cried. "We can get out! There's a chance for us, at least."

Somehow they managed to get out. They found themselves on the edge of a steep embankment. Below, water gleamed in what looked like a marsh. It was an uninviting, even a dangerous prospect, but Karl did not hesitate.

"Down!" he cried. "They'll remember that there are prisoners on the train in a minute. We've got to get away now. We can get through somehow!"

Hand in hand they raced down the embankment. Fortune favored them, as it is likely to favor those bold enough to seize a chance. There was water where they landed, but it was not deep. And after a hundred yards of slimy, muddy plunging through the marsh, they reached firm ground. But they did not stop running. Not until they reached a clump of woods did they rest and wait to catch their breath.

Behind them, from the direction in which they had run, a shot or two rang out.

"I thought so!" said Karl, grimly. "Some of the others waited too long. The time to run was when everyone was shocked by the accident."

They were breathing hard.

"We've escaped! We're free!" panted Heinrich.

"We've only started to escape," said Karl.

"The hardest task is still before us. We've got to get other clothes, first of all."

"I never thought of that!" said Heinrich, in despair.

## CHAPTER XII

### A CHANGE OF CLOTHES

But Karl was as little disposed to give way to despair as to a premature rejoicing. The difference between him and Heinrich was that he foresaw difficulties, and so did not allow them to come upon him suddenly with discouraging force.

"We'll manage it somehow," he said. "I don't care what we do, Heinrich. If we can't get clothes any other way, we'll steal them!"

Heinrich stared at him.

"Why, that's dishonest—" he began.

"We're in the enemy's country," said Karl, bluntly. "Just now we cannot think of ourselves, or of what we would like to do. Our duty is to the fatherland. And, by hook or by crook, we've got to get that message to the Imperial Chancellor. After we get back to Germany, we can make right anything we do that seems wrong. We would be caught the first time we showed ourselves in a

village in these clothes, Heinrich. And I'm not going to be caught again until I have sent that message!"

"We shall have to wait until dark, then," said Heinrich. "If we stay here in these woods, we have a chance, I think. Don't you?"

"Yes. And that's just what I mean to do. Then we can steal out and see what sort of country this is. I think we are some distance from any town. But I don't know, and we dare not guess. We must be sure before we run any risk at all."

"I am sleepy," said Heinrich. "I feel as if I couldn't stay awake any longer."

"Lie down then, and sleep," said Karl. "I will stay awake and keep watch until you are rested. Then I will sleep while you watch. Aren't you hungry, Heinrich?"

"I believe I could eat a horse, Karl! But it is not the time to think of that."

Karl smiled to himself, but he was not really surprised. He had always known that in a real emergency Heinrich was to be trusted. Now,

while Heinrich lay down and fell at once into a deep, peaceful sleep, Karl watched and thought. The railway accident had certainly come to their aid in a fashion little short of miraculous, and yet it had only opened the way to freedom and to success in sending the all-important message. There was a good chance, he thought, that no very diligent search would be made for them. But even so, there was sure to be danger.

"Heinrich and I are not English, after all," he said to himself. "We speak their language well, but do we speak it well enough to deceive an Englishman? We are likely to be arrested any time. And even if we go free, how are we to send the message?"

He knew that there could be no direct communication with Germany. A message might be sent to America and back across the ocean, or to Holland or Denmark, and so, through a neutral land, to Berlin. But the censorship, he was sure, would apply as strictly to such neutral countries as to Germany itself. The best chance was to get

out of England, to escape themselves, and then, when they were safe on the continent, to send the message. And always the first problem remained to be solved—the acquisition of clothes that would make them look like ordinary English boys.

While the shadows lengthened and evening approached, he wrestled with the problem, and he was no nearer a solution when Heinrich at last woke up with a start.

"I am a selfish pig, Karl," said Heinrich. "I did not mean to sleep so long. But you should have waked me up. Sleep now. It is your turn."

Karl hesitated. It was almost dark enough, he thought, to begin the search for other clothes. But he was very tired; the day had been full of terrible and exhausting experiences, and they had had very little sleep on the *Koenigin Luise* the night before.

"I think I will sleep for an hour, Heinrich," he said. "But wake me then without fail. I am going to sleep only because I think I will be able to see things more clearly after I awake."

But there was no need for Heinrich to wake him. Karl had the curious ability that some people possess, seemingly by instinct, to set a sort of mental alarm clock and awake at any given moment. And, just as Heinrich was reluctantly deciding that it was time to rouse him, he sat up.

"No one has come by?" he asked, at once on the alert.

"No," said Heinrich. "There is no road very near us, I think."

"Let us go and find one, then," said Karl. "I have an idea."

They walked through the woods, and after going perhaps a quarter of a mile, stopped suddenly at the sound of voices.

"That must be a road. There are people passing whom we hear," whispered Heinrich.

"Yes. Come on, very quietly. We will hide in a hedge. I want to see them."

Three men were walking toward them. Karl listened eagerly and when they had passed on he turned to Heinrich.

"We will go the way that they are going," he said.

"All right. But why that way rather than the other?"

"That was just why I wanted to listen to them. I wanted to find out whether they were going to a village or coming away from it. They have just left the village. So we know now which way not to go. If we go along this way we are almost sure to come to a house where we will have a chance to find what we want."

"Oh, I see!" said Heinrich. "That is a good idea, Karl. I did not think of that at all."

Keeping to the fields, lest they encounter someone on the road who might take too keen an interest in them, they trudged along for nearly two miles. Several times they came to small cottages, but around those they made detours.

"There would scarcely be a chance for us to find what we are looking for here," said Karl, at the first of these. "We must look for a larger house. There must be some big place we shall come to."

And at last they found a neatly trimmed box-wood hedge barring their way. They got through it with some little difficulty, and found themselves in a park-like enclosure, where old trees rose above a smooth velvety turf.

"Ah, now if we have a little luck, we shall be all right!" said Karl. "Bear in, away from the road. I think we are likely to find a lodge by the gate. This place looks big enough and well kept enough to have something of the sort."

They went on over the turf for some distance, until, on a piece of rising ground, they came in sight of the great house of the place, an old, red brick mansion. Not a light showed from its many windows and the entire place seemed to be deserted.

"Oh, we *are* in luck, Heinrich," said Karl. "I believe the house is empty! And it is almost sure to have what we want!"

"Don't you think there may be burglar alarms, Karl?"

"Good boy, Heinrich! I hadn't thought of that.

Yes, there may be. They'd leave the great house empty, but there'll be men at the gate and in cottages, probably, to answer an alarm. Now let me see—I had a pair of pliers last night that I slipped into my pocket in the wireless room—yes, here they are! We'll see if we can't find those wires and cut them."

They were careful in approaching the house. And when they came to windows that seemed to be those of a billiard room, with wide bows, Karl gave a little cry.

"Do you see that open window?" he said. "I believe that's a trap! A burglar would think that would make it easy for him to get in—and as soon as he pushed the window open the bells would ring. Let's see if we can't find a wire leading from that window."

"Here it is," said Heinrich, a minute later. "At least it's a wire. And I can't find any other. We'll cut it, anyhow. We've got to take one chance. Even cutting the wire may ring the alarm. But not unless it's the very newest sort of burglar

alarm. And this doesn't look like the sort of place that would go in for the latest German and American inventions."

In a moment he cut the wire, and it sprang up and slapped him in the face. But he only smiled, for no din of clanging bells followed the breaking of the wire.

"We'll wait a minute," he said. "If nothing happens, we can go in. I hope my matches will strike. They got wet this morning, but they've had time to get dry again."

"I think it's safe now, Karl. Let's go in."

They crawled through the window. They felt the curious sensation of honorable boys who were doing something that was, in appearance at least, dishonorable, even if it was fully justified by the extraordinary fact of war, that for them wiped out, in the interest of the fatherland, so many of the rules by which they had been taught to guide their lives. But they did not hesitate.

Bending low, so that he could not be seen

should anyone chance to be within sight of the window, Karl struck a match. In its light he saw where the door was, and in a moment they were out of the billiard room and in the hall. Here, with no windows about, it was safe to let the light of a match fall more freely, and just as it was out, Karl pounced upon an electric torch—a discovery of the greatest value. With this they were able to find their way up the stairs.

"Up to the third floor!" whispered Karl. "We want to find the room where the boys slept. It would be a joke on us if there had never been any boys in the family, though, wouldn't it?"

"Don't think of it! It would be too awful, Karl! After breaking in this way! I feel like a thief, even though I know we have a right to do this."

On and up they went. And on the third floor the first room they entered proved to be the right one. It was unmistakably a boy's room. And in a closet hung a dozen suits of clothes, in a condition more or less good. In the closet, too, where

no ray of light could reach a window and betray them, they changed their clothes.

"Now we *look* English, at least!" said Karl.

"Karl," said Heinrich, "I'm going to leave a note for whoever owns these things. I'm going to tell him why we are taking them."

"All right, Heinrich. That's not a bad idea, really. It will make me feel better, too," replied Karl.

Heinrich scribbled the note, and they left it on the bed in the room from which they had taken the clothes. Then, still lighting their way with an occasional flash from the electric torch, they made their way out of the house. Not a sound pursued them, and in ten minutes from the time when they had completed their transformation by means of the "borrowed" clothes, they were in the road again.

"And now," said Karl, "for something to eat! You're a real hero, Heinrich, and if the Kaiser knew how you had starved without a word of complaint all this day, you'd have an Iron Cross!"

"Do you think it will be safe to try to get something, Karl? I—I'll wait until morning if you think it's better!"

"No. We must take that chance, Heinrich. We have a lot to do even now, though we have accomplished a good deal. What is really the hardest part of our work remains. And we can't hope to escape without meeting some English people. We must face them some time—and as well now as any other time. I am going into the first inn we come to. We will find out whether we really look like English boys."

"You'd better do most of the talking, Karl. You do it better than I, I'm sure."

They came, after a mile or so, to a small village, which naturally boasted an inn. Boldly they went into the parlor, and Karl called for the landlord.

"We're tired and hungry," he said. "Can you give us some supper?"

"There's not much in the house, sir," said the landlord. "Bacon and eggs. If you'll share the table with this gentleman, sir, I'll give you what

I have. He's looking for some Germans as escaped from the accident, sir—dirty spies, young gentlemen! Sit you down!''

## CHAPTER XIII

### A WINDFALL

Karl dared not look at Heinrich. In a daze he let his eyes rest on the man who already sat at the table. He was a middle-aged, athletic looking Englishman.

"Sit down, lads," he said, amiably. "Do you live around here? No—you needn't tell me you don't, for I know everyone for miles around. On a walking trip, I expect?"

"Yes. We've been walking through the country," said Karl. He had hard work to keep the hysterical note out of his voice, so great was his relief, for it was plain that they passed muster; that they looked and spoke enough like English boys not to arouse suspicion.

"I'm covering some country myself," said the Englishman. "Only I'm doing it on a motor-cycle. I suppose you heard of the accident on the line? Three or four of the German prisoners they

were taking up to London from Harwich escaped. We've rounded up all except two young fellows—sailors, they were. But they'll be caught before morning."

"I wish we could help you!" said Karl. "Have you any idea of where they went? I don't see how they could get very far."

"They can't. Oh, we'll catch them right enough. They'll try to get up to London, I think. There are all sorts of German spies there—men we don't even know are Germans, you know. If they get with any of those gentry, we'll probably never catch them. But we've got a net drawn pretty tightly for them."

"I should think they might try to get to sea," suggested Heinrich.

"Oh, never! They couldn't get a boat. We're not even looking for them along the coast. Along the roads to London and inland—that is where we'll find them. Ah, here is our supper!"

All three of them fell to heartily enough. Karl and Heinrich, for all the fright they had had at

the landlord's words at first, were hungry enough to forget any danger they might be running. And, indeed, if they could sit at the same table with one of the men who was hunting them, it seemed that they were in no great danger.

"Have there been many spies caught down here, sir?" asked Karl, presently, when the landlord had been sent for a second helping.

"Not so many that we can prove are spies," said the Englishman. "The best catch we made was a secret wireless plant that we raided yesterday. My boy spotted that—and he's only fifteen! A Boy Scout and bright as a button. It's a new sort of dodge—only a sending station, we think. No mast, but it's on a cliff, right on the water's edge. We picked up a couple of Germans there. I suppose they've been sending out whatever the spies discovered."

"I suppose that's been destroyed, sir?"

"No. Fact is, I think the government may be able to use it. They're sending down a man tomorrow who knows the German code. He'll send

out some false information—d'ye see? The Dutchies will think it's straight and make use of it—and perhaps we'll be able to lead them into a trap. Ha-ha!"

Both the boys echoed his laughter.

"Just luck that we found the place. Do you know where the coastguard station is? Well, it's as near due east from here as you could fly if you were a bird. And this wireless of theirs isn't more than three hundred yards south of the coastguard station! Isn't that German impudence for you? To be doing that sort of thing right under our noses!"

Karl could scarcely conceal his delight. He wondered if Heinrich, too, understood how completely this too talkative Englishman was playing into their hands. For now, at last, Karl saw the way clear. He saw how they could make use of this information; how they could actually use this wireless plant to deal a mortal blow to England. If—But it was a big if, as he knew very well.

"I suppose the place is under guard now, sir,"

he asked. "In case any of the Germans should try to go down there?"

"Oh, yes, there's a man there. But there's no jolly fear of the Germans trying to get near it, you know. They know that we've rounded up the spies around here. They'll keep away, never fear. And in the morning we'll turn their own gun against them! Ha-ha!"

He was still laughing when he got up.

"Well, I must be off," he said. "Good-night, boys! Hope you have a good time."

"Good-night, sir! Thank you," they echoed.

"Due east—and three hundred yards south of the coastguard station!" whispered Heinrich when they were alone.

"So you do see the chance, too?" said Karl. "Oh, it sounds too good to be true!"

"If we can only get one message off, Karl! Then they can catch us again, and I'll be willing to stay a prisoner until the war is over!"

"Well, it's the best chance we'll have, Heinrich. We must try it, and as soon as we can.

Have you had enough to eat? I tell you what—we'll get them to put up a package of bread and cheese for us. We don't know when we'll get another chance to sit down for a meal again, you know."

And so when they had paid their reckoning, they departed, feeling much better than when they had entered the inn, with full stomachs and enough bread and cheese to assure them of a good meal in the morning if they had no chance to buy a real breakfast.

"Due east?" said Karl. "From what he said, I believe we won't find a straight road. We had better fix our position by the stars. Then we shall be able to find the place, no matter how much we have to twist and turn about."

With their training as Boy Scouts, this was an easy matter. Scouts in every country are supposed to be able to find their way with only the signs that nature provides to help them. And so now they struck out, once they had fixed their destination in relation to their position and the

fixed stars, sure that they would strike the coast at the right point. They had about seven miles to go, and perhaps more, but they set out at a good, swinging pace that would soon cover the distance, since there was no time to lose. And they could not have been more confident had they been going from one well remembered spot to another in their own home of Dusseldorf.

They followed the roads as well as they could, though they struck off across the fields whenever they seemed likely to save time by doing so. Soon they crossed the railway, and after that the strong smell of the sea in their nostrils grew more and more powerful. Before long they could hear the sound of the surf, and when they came out at length upon the downs, and could look down over the cliffs to the breaking waves below, they were less than a mile to the south of the coastguard station, as they guessed its location.

"Good!" said Karl. "Now, unless we have lost our bearings entirely, we ought to come to this tower where the wireless is if we go straight along

the downs. I think I can figure out just about where the coastguard station is."

"Yes, I believe we are on the right path, Karl. See, there is a little indentation before us, if we keep straight north. That would be about where the wireless was. We must go carefully now."

They walked on in complete silence. The night was very dark. Seemingly they were alone on the downs. They had half expected to meet patrolling coastguards, but it was evident that, whatever England feared, invasion from the sea was not among her terrors. And then, just as they were within sight of a curious little round tower, that looked like a lighthouse, there came a sound that made them jump. It was the crash of a wireless spark.

"Cra-a-sh!" it sounded, in the still night air, above the pounding of the surf. And again. Then a message roared out.

"It's the fool that's on guard, playing with the spark," whispered Karl. "Come closer. But I'm glad he's doing it! I was afraid that, if we could

get him out of the way, our spark might be heard. If he's been doing this, it won't matter. They'll think he's still at it."

The wireless ceased after a minute. By that time they were under the little window through which they could see a light shining. The sound of voices came to them.

"If any of the German ships picked up that spark, they'll wonder what's wrong," said one voice. "Give them something to think about, anyhow. What, going so soon? Stay awhile! I'm afraid I'll fall asleep watching this place to see that it doesn't blow away in the night!"

"Sorry, old chap, but I've got to be moving along," said another voice. "The wife'll wonder where I am. As for you, it's what you get for being a territorial. Do your blooming duty! Ta-ta!"

"I'll come down and see you off. My regards to the missus. I'll be over for breakfast if they relieve me in time."

"Right! We'll save some for you if you're

late," he said, like a very hospitable host.

Karl moved silently to a position near the door, and Heinrich followed him. It was opened in a moment, and a young man came out. He paused to light his pipe, then he went swinging across the downs. Just inside the door another man, in the uniform of a territorial soldier, watched him. At last, with a sigh, he turned. He pushed the door behind him, but it did not shut—for Karl's foot held it open.

"Beastly bore!" he said aloud, but to himself. "As if this bally place needs to be watched to-night! I—"

Karl landed on his shoulders. Before he could cry out, his mouth was stuffed. In two minutes he lay trussed like a turkey, with angry, glaring eyes. He was speechless because he had been scientifically gagged. He was in no pain, but his mental state was plainly indicated by his furious eyes and his livid cheeks.

"We're awfully sorry," said Karl, pleasantly. "I'd like to let you up on parole, you know, but

I wouldn't blame you a bit if you gave your word and then broke it. Because we're going to make quite an important use of this wireless plant. I was so glad when I heard you sending just now and knew that it was in good order."

"Come on," said Heinrich. "There may be others coming. We've no time to waste."

"You're right, Heinrich," agreed Karl. And they raced up the stairs to the wireless room.

"Hello! New sort of wireless to me," said Karl. "Still I think I've read about it. Now see what she's tuned to. Get the right pitch—the one we used on the *Koenigin Luise*. All right?"

"All right," said Heinrich, after a few moments of manipulation.

"Cra-a-a-sh!" went the spark.

Through the night the signal roared.

"All stations!" called Karl, desperately, in the official code they had learned on the lost *Koenigin Luise,* trusting that it had not been changed. "All stations! I can only send. Relay to Imperial Chancellor, Berlin."

And he sent the mysterious message he had obtained from the spy in the train flying out over the North Sea. There was no way of knowing whether or not the message was received and understood. He could only send it again and again, and pray that all would be well. Then he tapped out the story of how he and Karl had obtained the message, and a warning of the trick that the English meant to play in the morning. And at last he sat back.

"That's all we can do!" he said. "We've done our best. Now we've got to try to escape. I think we can get down to the beach. If we can slip along there for a few miles, we may get away for a time. I think we'll be caught, but—"

"We'll give them a run for their money? Is that what you mean, Karl?"

"Yes. I think we've done that already, though! Oh, if they have only understood the message!"

## CHAPTER XIV

### ON THE BEACH

They lingered for a few minutes. Both had inspected the sending mechanism of the plant carefully. Now Karl had a new idea.

"If we wreck this plant, they won't be able to use it to send any false messages to-morrow," he said, grimly. "There must be a peculiar quality here—something that stations looking for it would recognize. A message from an English commercial station or from one of their big naval stations wouldn't fool our people. That's why they planned to send their false message in the code they got hold of from here. Come on!"

It did not take long to reduce the delicate mechanism to utter ruin. Karl smashed the coherers; he also disconnected and spoiled the remarkably powerful batteries.

"I was wondering how they got along without a dynamo, and how they could operate a dynamo

in a place like this," said Heinrich. "These batteries explain it. I never heard of anything like them."

"They're a new invention—American, I think," said Karl. "It's a great improvement on anything there ever was before. Edison was working on the idea for years, I know, and there were other American inventors at work, too."

"Why do you suppose the station is only half equipped? Why isn't there a receiving apparatus?"

"There might be two reasons. They might only have had time to put up the sending machinery—and then there may be a receiving station somewhere near here. They might have thought that there would be more chance of fooling the English, and keeping them from finding them if they were divided up that way."

"Isn't there some arrangement like that in the Telefunken stations in America? The ones that get direct communication all the way across the Atlantic?"

"Yes, I think there is. I think the big station at Tuckerton can only receive, but not send. The station at Sayville can do both, though," replied Karl.

"Where do those stations work? What German station are they in touch with, I mean?"

"The great one at Emden."

"Karl, if there is a receiving station somewhere near here, they must have heard our messages! I wonder if there is? We might hear from them, I should think!"

"Even if there is, it may be twenty miles away —or even more. And they wouldn't be able to help us, Heinrich. They'd have to keep their own station going just as long as they could. Still I wish we'd thought of that sooner. We might have taken the chance of sending some messages to warn them of what's going on."

"Well, it's too late now. I suppose we'd better go, if we are going."

"Yes. They weren't looking very hard for us before—that is, they didn't have a good descrip-

tion of us. We really disguised ourselves when we changed our clothes. But when this guard here is found, the whole country will be looking for us. He must have had time enough to get a good idea of what we look like. Unless he's an absolute fool, he will be able to describe our clothes and every detail of our appearance. So we have just as long to get away as it will take them to find him."

"And how long do you suppose that will be, Karl?"

"You can make just as good a guess as I can! Until morning, perhaps—unless that friend of his comes back to see him again. He said he would go over to his house for breakfast, you know, when he was relieved."

"Seven o'clock perhaps, maybe even a little later. If we find that we can walk along the beach, we may get quite a long way before that."

"Well, it's time we started. Don't forget that electric torch. We may find it useful down below."

They saw that their prisoner was still secure when they left the tower. He glared balefully at them, and they found it easy to imagine what he was trying to say—what he was thinking, that is, since his mouth was useless, on account of the gag.

"Seems a shame to leave him like that. He must be pretty uncomfortable," said Karl, with a look of remorse. "But it can't be helped, of course. I want the one chance in a million we still have of going free. He's really better off than we are, and he ought to know it. He's sure to be found."

"What will they do to him, Karl, for getting caught that way?"

Karl stopped suddenly, and laughed.

"I never thought of that!" he said. "Heinrich, we've got a better chance than I thought, I do believe! Do you think he'll ever confess that he was surprised and tied up like that by a couple of boys? He's not so very much older than we are, and it would hurt his pride too much! I bet he will say that at least a dozen men surprised

him, and that he was only overcome after making a desperate resistance!"

"Oh, you're right, Karl! He wouldn't admit that we had caught him so completely off his guard, would he? Then he may not describe us at all!"

"That's the chance I mean. If that's so, we'd still better take to the beach. But I don't think we need to worry about a careful search. The only danger would be that we might run into him, himself. Then he'd find some way of having us arrested, you know."

"Of course!"

They had been going along the cliff. It seemed to go straight down, in a sheer fall, but Karl knew that if they were patient, they would soon find some path by which they could go down to the water's edge. And after a little time they did find such a place. The descent was not easy, but with the aid of the light from their electric torch, they made it.

"Let's look around a bit, Heinrich," said Karl.

"Do you see? The cliff really slopes in. You could drop a line from the top, and it would swing clear all the way down to the beach. And the beach is much wider than I thought. There must be nearly a hundred yards between the water and the cliff right here."

"Why is that, I wonder?"

"It's curious. For a long time, you see, the water ate away the land. I think that at one time at high tide the sea was right up to the cliffs here. Then there was some change, and now new land is being made again—this beach. A hundred years from now that line of cliff may be quite a long way inland, and they'll build a town here on the beach. And in other places, along this same coast, the sea is driving people away from their houses, just as it does along the channel coast. There are villages near Brighton, I've heard, that will sink into the sea some day."

"If a few more mine layers and submarines do their work, the day will come sooner than they expect, Karl. Because then our fleet will beat the

English fleet, and after that it will bombard the English coast while our soldiers land!"

"That day's a long way off yet, I'm afraid, Heinrich."

"Don't you believe that we're going to win? Why, our army must be near Paris by this time!"

"I hope so, Heinrich. But you must remember that really we don't know anything about the war. All we know is what we've had a part in ourselves. You saw all the troops the French were rushing to the border. And we can't use our whole army to fight them this time, as we did in 1870."

"Why not?"

"Because the Russians are on the other side and we've got to fight them, too."

"Oh, the Russians!" Heinrich spoke contemptuously. "None of our officers are afraid of them! The Austrians will look after them, Karl. Perhaps we will send a few regiments from Konigsberg to hold them back. But, even so, half our army is enough to beat the French."

"No country ever won a war yet that despised its enemies, Heinrich. I believe we will win, because we are right. But I don't think we will win easily. The French are good fighters. If they had had good generals before, we should never have won so easily. And why do you speak so of the Russians? Think how many of them there are!"

"Yes—and think of how easily the Japanese beat them! There were just as many of them then, weren't there?"

"No, there weren't. Because Russia was fighting that war a good many thousand miles from home. She had to send her troops all the way across Siberia, into Manchuria. And she had just one line of railway, with only a single track, to carry them. Russia never had more than half a million soldiers in the field in that war. I don't believe she had as many as that, even at Mukden, the greatest battle in that war. Against us she can put two million in the field in less than a month."

"But one German is worth two Russians!"

"Suppose he is? We would still have to keep a million men to fight the Russians, wouldn't we? If we had those men, it would be easier to beat France. Perhaps we are winning there, even as it is. But we don't know that. No, Germany has got to be ready to fight a long war, even a defensive war, if she must."

"But I hope we can come over here. I don't like the English, Karl."

"I do. I like the English well enough, but I don't like England. It is England that we must beat, really, after all—not France or Russia. The English would like to ruin our trade. They don't want us to have a great navy. I believe that is why we are warring on England now."

"I would like to know what is happening, Karl. It seems terrible to think that our fathers and uncles are fighting, and that we don't even know what they are doing, or where they are."

"We know that they are serving the fatherland, Heinrich, and that we are doing that, too. That

is all that any German can do now," said Karl.

While they talked they were making their way southward along the beach.

"We are closer to the sea than we were," said Heinrich, suddenly.

"Yes. The beach is getting narrower," said Karl, anxiously. "I was afraid of that. I hope that the water will not cut us off."

But it was exactly that that happened. They had walked not more than a mile when they came to a spot where the sea beat directly against the cliffs. It was not shallow water, through which they could wade, either. They stared at one another in dismay.

"No use trying to go on this way," said Karl, finally. "It looks to me as if this lasted for quite a distance—and we would run a great risk for no great gain if we tried to get around by swimming. We don't know how far we'd have to go before there was a beach again."

"Perhaps we could get past this spot at low tide, Karl."

"Perhaps we could—but we don't know that. There may be deep water even when the tide is out. You see, we have no way of telling how deep the water is right in front of us here. There is a break in the cliff—I think there are rocks that we cannot see. It is very curious. And there is nothing to do but to go back and try it in the other direction."

"That would take us toward the coastguard station."

"I know. But it can't be helped. We'll have to take that chance, such as it is."

And so they began to walk back. They were quieter now; things seemed to be turning against them. They felt a great loneliness though neither quite wanted to voice the feeling. And Heinrich's reference to the ones who were serving Germany on the firing line had brought sad thoughts. No German, as they understood, could grudge a life that was given for the fatherland. But the thought of the lives that must be sacrificed was saddening. There was no lack of patriotism in

that thought, either. They knew that their fathers and many other relatives would be at the front, and they wondered how many changes there would be when the war was over.

In their ears there was no sound but the crunching of their own footsteps and the monotonous pounding of the surf. Seemingly no people ever traveled the beach at night. Heinrich spoke of that.

"In ordinary times there would be people here—not at night, perhaps, but plenty in the daytime," said Karl. "I think there would be tents for bathers, too. But this is war. We are at war with Belgium, too, we heard. Think of Ostend! Do you remember how gay the beach there was, with thousands of bathers? You would not find one there to-day, I think."

Suddenly a dull roar shattered the silence of the night. They started.

"That was a gun!" said Karl. "Out at sea? What can that mean?"

Then in swift succession came other reports.

They stared eagerly out over the surf, trying to see through the veil of the night. Far down on the horizon, they saw a faint glare.

"It looks like a burning ship!" said Heinrich. "Can it be our fleet?"

"No—not so near," said Karl. "Oh, look!"

Directly before them, on the top of the cliff, a rocket sailed into the sky, and then another, and another.

## CHAPTER XV

### THE MESSAGE OF THE SEARCHLIGHT

"What's that for?" gasped Heinrich.

"They're signalling from the coastguard station, of course," said Karl. "They've got to do that for they probably can't tell what's going on out there at sea any better than we can. And their job is to give the alarm if there's anything to show that the enemy is near the coast at all. Those rockets will bring out territorial troops to man the coast defences here."

Over the water the faint, distant glare died away. The firing stopped, too. There had been the one loud roar, and then a subdued murmur of firing. Now, from the coastguard station, a beam of white light flashed out suddenly. It swept the tossing waves before them, turned in, and ran along the beach.

"Lie down!" cried Karl quickly, before the light reached them. "Face down! They'll never

spot us at that distance. I think we are safe."

He suited the action to the word, and Heinrich was down as quickly as Karl himself.

"Here's a fine mystery!" said Karl, as they lay there. The searchlight's beam had swept over them without pausing and it was not sent back, as it would have been had they aroused suspicion. "Don't get up, Heinrich! Stay where you are! If the light does come back we must be here in the same position—just in case anyone did see us. They'd think we were bits of wood, but even these stupid English might get suspicious if a lump of wood got up and moved away!"

"All right," said Heinrich. "You say it's a mystery. It certainly is one to me!"

"I don't see how any of our ships could get in so far, in clear weather, Heinrich, do you? And I don't think there's been any fog since the one yesterday morning—or is it still this morning?—that ended the poor old *Koenigin Luise* when it lifted."

"A submarine might have come through."

"Yes, of course. But why? No submarine would want to come as far as this in this direction. It would have had to go through the line of big battleships to do that, and it wouldn't have come any further. It would have stayed there and tried to sink as many as it had torpedoes for," argued Karl.

The coastguard station had begun to signal with its searchlight now, moving the beam up and down.

"All right. It's safe enough to move now, I think," said Karl. "We'll stick as closely as we can to the cliff. Then we'll be in its shadow, and there'll be no chance of anyone above to see us, light or no light."

"Where are we going, Karl? What difference does it make which way we go?"

"It doesn't make any! But we'd better keep on moving. If we stay still I shall go mad, I think. If we only knew what was going on there—hello!"

He stopped short, staring at another searchlight that had suddenly flashed out, perhaps five miles

away, and at sea. Then, all excitement:

"Karl! I never saw a searchlight like that—it is shooting down, not up!"

"I know it. Can't you understand? It's from a Zeppelin! One of our airships! That's what the firing was about, and all the excitement. It's a Zeppelin raid!"

"There must be more than one. That searchlight is being used for signalling!"

"You're right, Heinrich! Watch those signals—perhaps we can find out what's going on at last! They'll be in our code—the one we know!"

Eagerly, intently, they watched the flashing searchlight. Suddenly Karl gave a cry.

"Heinrich, it's not to another Zeppelin that they're signalling! It's to us—to us or to the other Germans who were in the other part of the wireless station! They must have picked up our signals. They've been in trouble. They need a map. One basket was shot away, and the maps they had were lost! Quick, light a fire here! Gather up brushwood—make the fire as quickly as

you can. Then get away from it, and hide!"

"Why?" gasped Heinrich. "I couldn't read the signals—not all of them—"

"Do as I say! I'll be back as soon as I can! There's a chance that no one here will see the fire, but if they do, you must be away from it. Better yet, when you have made the fire, come up the path to the top of the cliff, and wait for me there in the bushes."

Heinrich was still dazed, but he began to gather up the material for a fire, and Karl, satisfied that he would obey, even if he did not understand, raced for the beginning of the path to the top of the cliff.

What he planned to do was daring and desperate enough. He knew that the rockets from the coastguard station must have aroused many soldiers by this time, and that there was more than a chance that some of them would have gone to the wireless tower where he and Heinrich had left their helpless prisoner. But it was there that he meant to go, running whatever risk there might

be. For there he had seen a map—a great ordnance map of the eastern coast of England, that had evidently been used by the German occupants of the tower before they had been driven out by the English. That map he must get. The signal of the fire that he had told Heinrich to light was the one the Zeppelin had told him, or whoever might see and understand the frantic message of the flashing searchlight, to make.

Karl knew that in telling Heinrich to make the signal he had burnt his bridges behind him. He had to make good now, or grave disaster might well befall the Zeppelin. Of himself he did not think. He went up the cliff at full speed, and came to the top panting after his rapid climb. But he did not even stop to catch his breath. He ran on toward the tower, knowing that every second counted, that the moment he lost might be the one that would spell all the difference between success and failure.

Fortunately he encountered no one. In the road that ran two or three hundred yards from the

edge of the cliff, he heard plenty of signs of life. Motorcycles were being driven hard; men were gathering. But he had reckoned on the time that would be needed for concentration. So long as the Englishmen were only on the road he did not mind. He could see the tower now; it was still dark. And as he burst open the door he heard the stertorous breathing of the gagged and pinioned guard. He did not stop even to look at him.

Instead, he raced up the stairs and into the wireless room itself. He dragged down the great ordnance map and rolled it up, together with half a dozen others. One, he found, with a little sob of delight, was a detailed map of London. That was the one that was the most important, the most urgently needed of all. And then, just as he was at the door, he heard a rush of many feet downstairs!

A man cried out.

"Good Lord, what's this?"

They were releasing the guard. Now the gag was out of his mouth. And still Karl stood above,

rooted to the spot. He had failed after all! And by the slightest of margins. There were at least half a dozen men below and no chance for him to fight his way through. Even without arms, they could overpower him, and they would be armed. He groaned. And then he had an idea.

He heard the man who had been gagged gasping out some sort of explanation.

"What? Now? He's upstairs now? Come on!"

That was the new, fresh voice of one of the rescuers. Karl raced to the door. Just in time he slammed it in their faces, and turned the lock. There was a bolt. He shot that, too. On the door there came a heavy pounding.

"Open up, in there!" cried the voice. "We'll give you one minute—then we'll fire through the door! Come on! You haven't got a chance against us. We can send bullets through that door easily. Surrender!"

Karl laughed to himself. Silently he crept across the room. The window, a wide one, was

open. He had no means of guessing the drop to the ground. He had not been on that side of the tower and did not know, therefore, what sort of ground was below. But he did not hesitate. Still clutching the precious maps, he twisted and wormed his way through the window. He dropped the maps, and saw them, a patch of white, on the ground. And then, swinging by his hands, he drew up his feet and dropped.

It must have been a sheer twenty feet, but every muscle was limp as he struck. He fell, and rolled over and over, but he was absolutely unhurt. In a moment he had his maps, and he was a hundred feet away when a crash of pistol shots made him pause and grin to himself. He heard, very faintly, the chorus of furious shouts that came from the tower a minute later; that meant that they had broken down the door and found him gone.

But at that he tried to run even faster, for he knew that the moments of grace his trick had won for him were over now. The ground was soft, and,

while that had broken his fall and saved him, perhaps from broken bones, it meant that it would be easy for the men from the tower to see what he had done, and to track him. So now as he came to the path in the cliff where he had told Heinrich to wait for him, he slowed down only for a moment.

"Wait there for me, Heinrich," he called. "I will come back another way."

He raced on. For perhaps a hundred yards he ran on. He could hear the pack in hot pursuit, but the one thing he dreaded did not happen—the coastguards did not send their searchlight in his direction. Now, again, he had to take a desperate chance. He had seen something, earlier in the night, when the searchlight lighted up the cliff, that he remembered now and that had given him an idea. When he came to a stout bush he stopped. Clinging to the bush, he dropped over the sheer edge of the cliff. Until he was perfectly still, wholly steady, he hung. Then he released his hold and slid down slowly, with increasing speed, along the edge of the cliff. He slowed

himself up as much as he could, using his hands as brakes, until the palms were torn and bleeding. And, about ten feet below the top, his feet struck a ledge of rock that jutted out—a ledge that the searchlight had shown him, earlier. For a moment it seemed that he could not stop—that he would be pushed on, by his own momentum, away from the ledge that offered a precarious haven, and be hurled below. But just in time he managed to stop himself. At once he rose, and, bending low, began to run back along the ledge.

His danger was still great. At any moment the ledge might crumble beneath him or there might be a gap. But that chance, like all the others he'd taken, was necessary. He must go on now; there could be no going back. He had not gone more than twenty yards when he heard the pursuit above.

"I saw him once—now he's gone!" cried the voice that he had heard in the tower.

"He can't be far away. We'll have him in a minute!" cried another man.

Karl grinned and went on. The ledge grew narrower. Once he had to swing across a space in which it disappeared altogether, hanging on to a bush that grew straight out from the side of the cliff. But after that it grew broader again. And behind him now, and growing fainter, were the sounds of the pursuers he had eluded. There was something else, too. He could hear a sound like the buzzing of a million flies. This time he knew what that sound was. The Zeppelin! It was coming!

With a gasp he came at last to the path. The ledge had drawn him down. Now he raced up to the down.

"Heinrich!" he cried. "Are you there?"

"Here, Karl!" said Heinrich, steadily. "The Zeppelin is coming!"

And then the great airship swooped down upon them.

## CHAPTER XVI

### IN THE AIR AGAIN

"Here we are! Here—here!" yelled Karl.

Of no use now to try to conceal themselves. Seconds would tell the story. In a moment they would either have succeeded or failed. And it was to be success. Out of the night the monster swept down, bumping along the ground.

"Here!" called a voice—a voice they knew. And, for the second time, they were dragged up into the car of the Z-25 and came face to face with Captain Hartmann of the Imperial Flying Corps.

"What—*you?*" he cried, amazement and delight mingled in his voice.

"Up—up!" cried Karl. "They will be here in a moment!"

But the Zeppelin was already rising. From below, as she soared higher and higher there came a scattering volley. But the aim was bad, and in two minutes the great airship was far above the

levels in which she was in danger from bullets. Then, and only then, was there time for talk.

"Was it you who sent those wireless messages —with that cryptogram for the Imperial Chancellor?" said Hartmann. "Berlin called to all stations to acknowledge receipt. And the Chancellor wishes to know who got the message through. There is some talk of a decoration for whoever did it, I believe."

He plied them both with questions until he had the whole story out of them.

"We knew the *Koenigin Luise* was sunk," he said. "Almost all were saved. Schraft is a prisoner. You are the only ones aboard who escaped."

"You meant the signals that we saw for us, didn't you, Herr Hauptmann?"

"For you—though I did not know who you were, naturally!—or for any of our people who saw and could give me the maps. Ah, the maps! I almost forgot! Let me see them."

Eagerly he unrolled them and examined them.

"Ah, everything I needed!" he said, enthusiastically. "You have done well for Germany to-night!"

"But how did you lose your own maps? You have had adventures, too, it seems?"

"Not willingly, I can assure you. But we have done many things since we left you behind at Helgoland! First I flew over the British fleet far to the north, that guards the passage from Denmark to Scotland. I plotted their positions, and then returned, to signal all that I had observed to two of our submarines. They bagged two cruisers and a pair of colliers.

"I was back at Helgoland after that, when I got orders to cruise to the south and observe the damage that the mines the *Koenigin Luise* laid might do. We saw you sink, and later saw another English cruiser strike a mine. You were well avenged, you of the *Koenigin Luise!* And then came the strangest order I have ever received. I am carrying it out now.

"I was to cruise in the North Sea, as near the

British coast as was safe, until I got certain orders by wireless from Emden. For hours we waited. While the light held, I was high—very high. Then we came down. Our wireless picked up your signals. We heard your story of your escape, but you did not give your names. But I can tell you that we gave you a cheer, we up here, when we learned what you had done! I think your message for the Chancellor was the thing for which all had been waiting. For no sooner had that been acknowledged than we got our next orders."

"And what are they?" asked Heinrich.

"Wait and see, impatient one!" said Hartman, with a smile. "We are going now to carry them out. You are invited to attend the performance. It will be worth seeing, I promise you! And it was then that by pure chance I almost lost my ship and my chance to strike the blow I had been ordered to deliver. There was a sudden hitch with our engines. Before I could regain control, we were going down, down—down like a plummet. And then, just as it was about to be too late, I got

control, and we began to mount. But the mischief had been done. Just below us was a big cruiser, and she cut loose with a high elevation gun she happened to be carrying.

"I never believed before that a single shot could be so horribly accurate! It tore away our after basket—you can see what is left of it! There was no chance to rise. I had to fight back. We dropped a couple of bombs. And by good luck one went down a smokestack and blew her to pieces. It set her on fire and she sank while we were rising. She had a dozen smaller boats around, and they peppered away at us. But they couldn't touch us. It was that one shot that did the damage."

"Then that was the glare we saw that aroused the whole coast!" said Karl.

"Yes. And I can tell you it made me sick! In the service they don't care how good an excuse may be, you know. If you have done what you were ordered to do, well and good. If you fail—!"

He shrugged his shoulders.

"After that, of course," Hartmann went on, "they knew we were about, and I could risk my searchlight signalling. It was the only chance left. I might have been able to do what we have to do this night without the maps, but I could not be sure. But they had gone with the basket they shot away, and the only man in my crew who really knew London from above. I have never been in a ship that flew above London."

"Then they have really flown over London?" asked Karl.

"Nine times, to be exact, before war was declared," said Hartmann. "But it was delicate work. Most of the officers who had made those flights have been killed. It was bad luck that they should be in the bad accidents—the best men we had. If I had been one of those on the naval machine that was wrecked off Helgoland, it would have made no great difference. But it had to be our greatest experts. And so I took the chance of signalling. When I saw your fire I was ready to dance for joy!"

It was beginning to grow very cold, and Karl, looking over the side, saw that they had reached a great altitude. The night was warm on the surface of the ground. But in these high places, where the air became highly rarified, the cold was intense.

"There are some warm coats in that locker," said Hartmann, remembering that they were not clad for such work. "Put them on. Now I must study these maps. Ah, do you see that glare over there, to the southwest?"

Far below was a dim, reddish light.

"That is London!" said Hartmann. "I have never seen it before from here! I wish that we might stay. But we are making only a brief call to-night! We shall stay long enough to leave our cards, though."

He laughed, and fell to studying the maps. High as they were, Karl and Heinrich were soon able to make out the city that lay sleeping below. Even at night it was easy to see that this was a great city. The long, even lines of light marked

the streets. Here and there a larger patch of brightness showed where there was a square. Until they were almost directly over the city, there was no distinct marking of such lines; everything had blended into a common glare, even the huge searchlights that were criss-crossing constantly, moving here and there, searching the skies for just such a visitor as was now on its way.

"Will the searchlights pick us out, do you think?" asked Heinrich.

"They may. But even so, I don't believe we have much to be afraid of. There is very little chance for a gun to hit a ship like this."

"Yet she has been hit—this very night."

"But then she was flying low, and she was not under proper control. We are flying very swiftly now. They must aim a gun like the ones they use for firing into the air. And haven't you ever tried to hit a moving target? It is hard, even with a rifle. Even when you know just which way the target will move, as you do in the shooting galleries. When we are within range you will find that we

dart here and there, swerving constantly—just to make us harder to hit."

"They would aim in front of us, wouldn't they?"

"Yes. That is all that they could do. They would have to aim at a spot where they expected us to be by the time their shell reached it. And then—we would turn and go somewhere else, and the shell would fall back and do more damage on the ground than in the air!"

"The time is coming," said Hartmann. He rose from his study of the map and went to look over the side of the car. "London! The heart of an empire! From that patch of light below more than half the world is ruled! It sends its orders—and men come from Canada, from Australia, from India, to fight for it. After this war, who knows? Shall Berlin succeed to London as the capital of the world?"

"But we are going away from London!" cried Heinrich, suddenly. "We are curving away! Aren't you going to blow it up? To destroy that city?"

"Hardly that," said Hartmann, with a smile. "We are not making war on the women and children who are lying in their beds down there, as our own women and children lie in their beds in Berlin and Hamburg—in all our cities! No! It would do us no good to destroy London. And that is a task for a hundred Zeppelins, not for one.

"We shall strike at London, though, to-night —and with London, at the whole empire of Britain. We shall strike at its heart, at its brain and its nerve centre. Have you ever learnt to box, you two?"

"Yes," they answered.

"Well, then, when you are boxing another boy, you don't hit his legs, his arms, his body—just any place you can hit, do you?"

"No," said Heinrich. "We were taught to place blows where they would do the most good."

"Yes. You strike at the point of the jaw, because a man hit there loses his senses for a few seconds, and you win the fight. Or at the solar plexus, because that is where all his nerves are

centered. You do not want to hurt his whole body, you only want to make it helpless. It is so that we make war. We do not want to destroy England's body. And so we shall strike at her heart and brain to-night. That's why we are changing our course. Look! Do you see the river, below there?"

They could not see the water, but the river itself was marked out by the double line of lights, crossed by another row of lights wherever there was a bridge.

"Follow its course down toward the sea," said Hartmann. "That is where we are going. Not all the way, but far enough. And we shall come back over London itself."

Now the Zeppelin swooped down, lower and lower. Skillfully, handling her as if she had been a catboat in a fair wind, Hartmann tracked his course through the air so as to avoid the glancing searchlights.

"See," said Karl, "the searchlights move almost regularly, as if each man moved his in a certain arc always. There are dark places be-

tween them where the light never seems to strike.'

Soon they were beyond the range of the search-lights. Again Hartmann studied his map.

"Look down, straight down," he said. "You, Karl Adler! When you see a red light, mark it and call to me."

Eagerly they peered down, Karl and Heinrich. It was Heinrich who saw the red light first.

Hartmann gave up the steering control.

"So—now we are right over it," he said. "Half a degree to the west. Fire!"

## CHAPTER XVII

### THE BLOW FROM THE AIR

Below them the red light winked out. And as it did so, Karl and Heinrich saw a man dropping something through a space in the bottom of the car, while the airship hovered, its flight stayed, like that of a hawk in mid air. Three times he released his projectile. And then, with a sudden swift swoop, the Z-25 rushed forward. The next moment a deafening explosion stunned everyone on board for a moment into deafness. The airship, steady as a rock the moment before, shook and trembled. She was buffeted in a great gust of air that seemed to come straight up.

Far below, where all had been darkness, raged a sea of flame. Explosion after explosion shook the air. Tongues of green and yellow flame shot up, only to die down again.

"Woolwich Arsenal!" said Hartmann. "You have seen the last of it! There England's guns

were made. There her great reserve of war supplies was stored. It would take two years to rebuild what we destroyed in less than as many minutes!"

Of the confusion and the panic that frightful explosion must have caused below they saw nothing. They could hear no screams and shouts even, though it took little enough imagination to picture the scenes, to guess at the horrible din that must be rising from the city about the shattered arsenal.

"We have struck a blow as deadly to England as the loss of a whole campaign!" said Hartmann. "It did not cost Germany a single life, and only a few could have been killed below."

"But that explosion must have ruined the houses all about the arsenal itself," said Karl.

"There are no houses very near," said Hartmann. "None were allowed. That explosion broke all the glass for miles. It may have shaken down much plaster. But that is all. We have struck a deadly blow, yet no one can accuse us of

cruelty, of inhumanity. But we have more to do—and little time in which to do it. I am not afraid of their guns, but I don't want to meet an English aeroplane until we have finished our task. Keep watch for another red light on the roof of a house. It will mark our target again."

London was no longer a city of sleep. Everywhere below them, as they swooped down again, now careless of the flashing searchlights that were playing more vividly than ever, lights sprang into view. The terrific explosion the Zeppelin had caused had aroused all London. And now a confused roar did come to them. It was the stirring of the angry city, as thousands and hundreds of thousands, panic stricken, rushed into the streets. Yet from where they swept along in the upper lanes of the air, the sound was no louder than that of a hive of swarming bees. And the city below them, with its millions, was even more helpless than the hive of bees in the presence of man.

Like bees, this human hive below could sting. But its sting was guarded against; it was power-

less against the Zeppelin. There was an occasional sound of firing, as a searchlight's glare illumined the airship for a moment. But not even the song of bullets about them came to check their flight.

"There is the red light!" cried Karl, at last.

They were almost directly over the river. Now they swerved to the north and the west. Below them the red light persisted.

"Ready, Forster!" called Hartmann, in sharp command.

Again the man who had dropped the bombs with such deadly precision before prepared to do his task. His bombs lay at his hand; he opened the slide in the bottom of the car, and knelt, waiting the word to fire. It was a repetition of the previous attack. Once more the red light vanished. And once more the Zeppelin hovered like a hawk. But now the glare of a dozen searchlights was concentrated on her, bathing every man in the car with light.

"Fire!" said Hartmann. Down went the bombs.

Again there was an explosion, but one that sounded like the popping of a toy revolver after the discharge of a twelve-inch gun in comparison with the previous titanic roar. As a searchlight switched about suddenly to light up the scene below them, they could see a great building crumbling. Its walls collapsed; the ruins caught fire.

"There go the plans of England!" said Hartmann, soberly. The Zeppelin was shooting away now, dodging the searchlights. And she was climbing steadily.

"What buildings were those that you destroyed?" asked Karl. "The war—"

"The war office and the admiralty, yes," nodded Hartmann. "There they had all their plans, their codes, their reports from spies. At Woolwich we crippled the nervous system of the empire; here we reached its brain. My task is done—thanks to you!"

"There are two aeroplanes below us," said Heinrich, suddenly. "They are climbing in spirals. There are two men in each."

Hartmann called an order. In a moment a small machine gun was trained on the two machines below, and a rain of bullets spat out at them through the night.

"That is a pity—a great shame!" he said, indignantly. "We must defend ourselves. But if they allow non-combatants to remain in the streets they are the ones who will suffer most from the bullets."

"One of the 'planes is hit—I can see it staggering!" cried Karl. "Ah, there it goes down! It is still under control, but it must take to the ground."

"Full speed ahead!" cried Hartmann. "We will give this fellow a race! He can never catch us, unless he has more speed than any aeroplane of which we have ever heard in England! To the open sea—and so to the fatherland!"

And so the airship turned and fled from the city it had struck with such a deadly and paralyzing effect. Behind it, the glare of London faded into a dim glow. In the grey light that be-

gan to grow stronger, with the rising of the sun behind them, those on the Zeppelin soon could see the open country, with the neat fields, below them.

"There are the Sussex downs!" said Hartmann, pointing downward. "Do you see that town? It is Brighton."

"And the sea is beyond," said Karl. "Once we have crossed that, we shall be safe—we shall have escaped from England!"

"England will have escaped from us, rather, I think," said Hartmann, with a short laugh. "They have cause to remember our visit! Well, they are punished now for making war upon us. And all because we would not wait to let France strike at us through Belgium, but struck the first blow ourselves!"

"Is that why we are at war with England?" asked Karl, in amazement.

"It is the excuse they give. Pah! We knew that France was ready to attack us—that she had her armies massed on the Belgian border. We had

guaranteed the neutrality of Belgium—yes! But could we keep to our word when we knew that France was ready to break hers?"

"Why, everyone in Germany has always known that France would attack us through Belgium when war came!" said Karl indignantly. "What else was there for us to do?"

"Ah, every German asks that! And yet, because we defended ourselves by striking first, England makes war upon us. She has cut the cables, and all the world, we hear, denounces us for what we had to do in Belgium. But England, at least, has begun to pay."

"The English biplane is still pursuing us," said a man, coming up to Hartmann just then. "Will the captain order a higher ascent? He is gaining a little."

"He is, it's true!" said Hartmann, in surprise. "Yes, we will go up. So long as he is below us, he is harmless. Let him exhaust his petrol."

They were over the sea now. And suddenly one of the crew, grave concern plain in his bear-

ing, came up to Captain Hartmann and saluted.

"I have just discovered—a bullet must have struck it—" he said. "The second reserve petrol tank has leaked. We have scarcely enough petrol to carry us to the French coast."

"Thunder and lightning!" roared Hartmann. He sprang to verify the report for himself. "It is true!" he said, when he returned to his post. Then he smiled. "It will be a close call. But my work is done! If we are cheated out of our safe return, the fatherland can afford one Zeppelin and a few men for what we have accomplished behind us there!"

Now the course of the Zeppelin was altered. She was headed toward the north, and one engine was cut out.

"We will try to fly over Ostend and toward Brussels," said Hartmann. "By going more slowly we shall save much petrol, and we may be able to make a landing within the German lines. If we flew straight on, we should have to cross half of France before we came to the German front

and that we could not do. I think the chances are against us, even now. Ha! You were on board the *Koenigin Luise* as wireless operators, were you not? I was forgetting that!"

"Yes," said Karl, wondering.

"Then I shall send my report. My own wireless operator was lost when that cruiser struck us. Send now, as I dictate."

Karl went to the key, and sounded the call.

"What station can we reach?" he asked. "Your range is not great, is it?"

"Try the field station at Brussels. The Kaiser is there—at least he was yesterday. He will wish to be the first to hear the good news we have to send."

"Very well, sir," said Karl.

There was trouble at first. But in five minutes he had his connection established. And word by word he sent the message that Hartmann dictated, until his own name and Heinrich's came into the report.

"No, Herr Hauptmann!" he said, flushing

at that. "We do not deserve such praise—"

"Obey orders!" thundered Hartmann, but his severe tone was tempered by the twinkle in his eyes. "I am the judge of that!"

And so Karl sent the words as the captain dictated them.

After the message had been sent Karl sat waiting, the receiving instrument clasped about his head. For fifteen minutes or more there was no sound. Then his call ticked in his ear, and he answered mechanically. A moment later he started.

"Herr Hauptmann!" he said, in an awed voice. "A message is coming! The operator at Brussels says that it is signed by the Kaiser himself!"

Hartmann straightened up.

"Impossible!" he said. "It must be that the chief of staff—"

"Here it comes!" said Karl. He held up his hand, as if he had been the officer, to command silence.

" 'We have received the glorious news of what

the Z-25 has accomplished. From the bottom of our heart we thank Hartmann for these tidings. It is our pleasure to confer upon him the Iron Cross of the first and second class, the order pour la merite and to order his promotion to the rank of major. Upon every man of the crew we confer the Iron Cross of the second class. We shall find other means of rewarding the volunteers Adler and von Kunst, of whose devotion we have already had proof. Wilhelm, Rex et Imperator!' "

Every man in the car had crowded around, heedless of discipline, to listen. And now there rose a great cheer.

"Hoch der Kaiser!" they cried. They cheered Hartmann, newly promoted, by his new title of major. And, spontaneously, they raised their voices in the greatest of German battle hymns—*Deutschland, Deutschland ueber alles!* Wonderfully impressive the sound of the familiar strains must have been to the Englishmen, still struggling gallantly along below in their biplane.

As the song ended, a man turned and raised

the cry of "Land ho!" in a glad voice.

"The Belgian coast!" said Hartmann. He looked again at the gauge that showed the steadily diminishing supply of petrol, and shook his head. "There is Ostend," he said, pointing to a smudge of smoke above the low, flat coast, and sandy beach. No hills rose behind it; it was a flat and uninviting country.

Now the Zeppelin rose again, higher than she had been since her first approach to London during the night. In despair, the British biplane below gave up the chase now, and headed for Ostend, while the Zeppelin swerved to the north.

"Our line moves back and forth. I don't know whether we shall reach it or not!" said Hartmann, anxiously. "From above it is so hard to tell. I know that soon we must descend. Our best chance is for our people to see us. Then they can advance, perhaps, and enclose us as we descend."

They were over the land now. Below, the country was all flat. One problem was not present; a landing could be made almost anywhere. There

need be no selecting of a particular spot. They could stay aloft until the exhausted petrol forced them to descend. On a calm day they might have stayed up even after that, or if the wind had been favorable, allowing it to push them further and further inland. But now a strong wind was blowing off the coast, and to stay up meant that they would be blown out to sea.

"There they come—ah, the brave troops!" cried Hartmann.

Below, skirmishing was going on. The German line was being pushed forward as the Zeppelin descended. Plainly, their plight was understood. But it threatened to be a desperately close thing. And they came down at last in a field in which German and British marines were struggling. Out leaped the crew; there was a backward rush of the British. And Karl was carried back, a prisoner! All the rest were safe!

## CHAPTER XVIII

### THE LAST ORDEAL

Karl struggled desperately to free himself. But there was no chance. Two burly Englishmen had him fast, and they dragged him back with them.

"No tricks, now, young 'un," said one. "We don't want to hurt you. But you came out of that there airship, and we want to let the captain arsk you a few questions about her, if he wants to."

To continue his efforts to escape was useless. Karl saw that. And, after all, the main thing was that Hartmann had saved his ship. He and Heinrich were safe. He was not concerned much about himself. He did not think the English here were anxious to be burdened with prisoners. If the Germans were so close, it must mean that an attack in force might come at almost any moment. They might even let him go after a brief de-

tention. So he accepted his fate as gracefully as he could.

"All right," he said, in his excellent English. "You can let go, if you like. I won't try to get away. It wouldn't be any use, anyway, would it?"

"That's the idea! We ain't goin' to hurt you, my lad!" said the marine, releasing him. "Just come along with us quietly."

And so Karl was taken back to Ostend. He had been there before, but Ostend in time of war was not the place that he remembered. The Plage, the great promenade along the beach, was crowded with soldiers and officers. On the beach itself was a group of big British sea planes, with a few scouting machines of French make for land service—aeroplanes that could fly faster than the sea planes, but lacked their stability and their usefulness when overwater work was required.

Suddenly the two marines halted and saluted. An officer in naval uniform had come up to them.

"Who's your prisoner, my man?" he asked, sharply.

"Young Dutchman, sir. Got him off that Zeppelin we tried to catch. All the others got away. We just grabbed him as we got our orders to fall back, sir."

The officer's eyes lighted up.

"From the Zeppelin?" he said. "All right. I'll take charge of him. You did well to get him."

He dropped a heavy hand on Karl's shoulder.

"Come along with me, my lad," he said. "We want to know a few things about that Zeppelin and what you did over London!"

"You don't expect me to tell you, sir?" said Karl.

"I don't expect anything," said the officer, grimly. "But you may feel more talkative later. Do you know that you were captured within our lines—and that you're not in uniform? Do you realize what that means?"

Karl stared at him.

"An enemy not uniformed is regarded as a spy. And I think you're old enough to know the punishment of spies in wartime, if you are only

a boy. Think that over and then see if you don't feel more like answering questions when they're asked."

Karl said nothing. He knew that, technically, the officer was right. And he knew, too, that if by any chance the things he had done before he and Heinrich had been rescued by the Zeppelin were discovered, his youth would not save him. He realized now that his position was far more serious than he had thought. He was almost sure to be sent back to England. There he might well be identified by the man he and Heinrich had tied up in the wireless tower. And then— But he was determined to tell nothing, no matter what they threatened. If he must die, he would die. It would be for the fatherland.

His jailer led him into a hotel that, in the season, and in times of peace, is one of the most luxurious in the world. Now it was being used as headquarters by the British force that occupied Ostend. They went to a room on the second floor, and the officer, his hand still gripping Karl's

shoulder, knocked loudly at a certain door.

"Come in!"

The officer pushed the door open and saluted a man who sat at a desk.

"Prisoner captured from that infernal Zeppelin, Colonel," he said. "Caught in our lines, not in uniform. I thought you might like to question him."

"Very good! I will. Now, sir—"

He glared at Karl. And then, just as he was about to speak again, a shower of glass broke over him, and a great hole was torn in the wall behind him—the wall that was directly on the roof of the piazza of the hotel.

"What the—"

The officer rushed to the window. The man at the desk turned, brushing the blood out of his eyes from a cut made by the flying glass. For just one moment they forgot Karl. And in that moment he slipped through a door that was half open into a bedroom. There he crouched, ready to dive under the bed. It was a slim chance, but

the only one. They would never, he was sure, think that he would stay so close. They would look in the hall, everywhere else in the hotel, but not here.

And he was right. His flight was discovered in a moment. Yelling, the officer who had brought him dashed into the hall. In a moment there was a hue and cry. And then Karl had another inspiration. They might look under the bed—if so it would be the older man, the one who had been at the desk. He crouched behind the door that led into the bedroom, risking all, as he heard the colonel coming, breathing heavily. The colonel got down with some difficulty, for he was a heavy man, and looked under the bed. Then he rose, and went back toward the spot where the bomb—Karl knew that a German aviator must have dropped it—had shattered the room. In that moment Karl slipped under the bed.

Soon the other officer came back, panting.

"He must be somewhere in here!" he said. "I've—

"He's not! Got out while we rushed over to the window!" growled the colonel. "I've looked everywhere. Even under the bed in the next room. Oh, well, he's only a boy. I'm not sorry he got away. Plucky youngster!"

"I thought we might frighten him into telling us something," said the officer. "But very likely he didn't really know much, anyhow. I wonder how he happened to be aboard at all!"

"Don't know. I don't care. Details don't matter. But, man alive, there's only one thing to do now! We've got to do something to make up for what that Zeppelin did in London. Can you start to-night?"

"You mean you've changed your mind, sir? You'll let me try to do it?"

Karl listened eagerly.

"I think you haven't one chance in a thousand, but if you're willing to take that chance, why, go ahead! I've changed my mind because it's so necessary to do something to offset what happened in London last night!"

And then, while Karl listened, as he crouched under the bed, he heard the details of a plan that made his hair stand on end. It was daring, but Karl, listening to the young officer's explanation of what it was he meant to attempt, saw at once the deadly truth—that the chance of success was not one in a thousand, but one of failure—that success, as a matter of fact, was almost certain. The very daring of the plan was what made it so dangerous—so dangerous to Germany.

And here was Karl, compelled to listen, to know what was to be done, and utterly helpless—absolutely unable to do anything to stop it!

"All right. You may try it, then. You'll start at midnight, you say?"

"Yes. I can't be ready earlier."

"Good luck go with you! And you understand—no unnecessary violence. If you get your man, bring him here safe and unharmed if possible. But if it's a question between his life and yours, or of bringing him here dead or not at all—or even of leaving him somewhere dead, if you find

it impossible to bring him through, why—"

"I think I understand, colonel."

"All right. Send my orderly in. You'll find him in the corridor somewhere."

"I must escape! I must warn them!"

Every throbbing nerve in Karl's body cried the words as he lay there. But how? From the hotel he might escape easily enough. But to get out of Ostend, and that before midnight—there he seemed to face the impossible. With the German lines so close, there must be a cordon of sentries outside the town. But he must make the attempt. He felt, as he lay there, that it would be far better to be shot by a sentry as he tried to slip through the lines, than to make no attempt to avert the absolutely irreparable disaster that was threatened.

It seemed to him, as the hours crawled by, that he was never to have the chance even to get out of the room in which he was imprisoned. There was a ceaseless stream of visitors to the next room, where the colonel sat at his desk attending

to the routine business of the place. But at last it did stop, and the colonel came in, his shoes creaking, to wash his hands and prepare for dinner. Karl had begun to fear that the man meant to eat at his desk. But he went out at last, and Karl heard the key turned in the door. In a moment Karl was outside on the balcony. He slipped down a post at its far end a minute later, crossed the Plage boldly, and, once he was on the beach, slipped into one of the deserted bathing machines—the bathhouses on wheels that are drawn into the water by horses in the bathing season.

By pure chance, since he had had no time to make a selection, Karl had stumbled into a machine that was near the part of the beach where the British hydro-aeroplanes were parked. He could look from the window of his machine and see them. Every now and then an aviator went to the machine he used, started the motor and took the air, flying away. Sometimes a machine came down. But the thing that struck Karl most

forcibly was that the machines were not guarded. He began to understand that, however, after a little thought. He had seen no civilians at all along the Plage. Plainly, then, that promenade and the beach were reserved for soldiers, sailors and marines. But he was on the beach—and no one suspected it! Why, then, shouldn't he seize one of the sea planes and so make his escape?

Karl himself had never operated an aeroplane. But he had been up many times, for Dusseldorf is a famous aviation centre in Germany, and in addition to having seen men work the machines, Karl had studied the systems of control and flight of every known make of aeroplane. He knew these English machines thoroughly, in theory. At any rate, it was worth the trial, but not until later. Now there were too many men about the 'planes. Twice, as he decided that it was safe to make his attempt, he was driven back to his shelter by the arrival of machines from the air. But at last the coast was clear.

He walked boldly up to the first of the machines.

A quick glance showed him that no one was observing him. He started the motor. And not until he was well up, and flying over the sea, did the first challenge ring out. A shot followed, but he was heading out to sea, since that presented the quickest way of getting out of range. Not until he was safe on that score did he turn and begin to climb.

Had he had more time to think of what he was doing, had his mission been less important, Karl might have been frightened. But as it was, too much depended upon him. He could not fail! And he did not. He was two thousand feet in the air when he passed over Ostend again, and in the darkness, safe from detection, much more so from bullets. In the country over which he had still to fly, before he reached the German lines, he felt that he was safe, too, for his machine would be taken for that of a friend.

But then he thought of the sequel to that—that any Germans who saw him would think it was a British machine in which he was flying. That

thought brought him down as soon as he felt sure that he had passed within the German skirmish line. He could not risk his life now until he had told what he had overheard. And so, abandoning his machine in the field in which he landed, he went on until a German sentry challenged him.

He told his story to the officer to whom he was taken, and was laughed at. But he was so insistent that he reached a superior officer, who decided to take no chances.

"I shall send you to Brussels under guard," said this officer. "But I shall telegraph your story, and proper precautions will be taken. Major Hartmann is there. I think you tell the truth—for otherwise you could not know of what happened on the Zeppelin. But I am doing my duty, in any case."

There was no need to search for Hartmann in Brussels. He was waiting in the station, and Heinrich von Kunst was with him. At the sight of Karl, Hartmann brushed the escort aside.

"I thought you were lost, mein Karl!" he

cried. "But it was a good hour—that in which you were captured! Your warning came in time! The Kaiser was not alone, as he has been each night before. And instead of capturing the Emperor, that Englishman is now a prisoner himself! I have orders for you. In the morning the Kaiser will receive you and Heinrich von Kunst—the Kaiser in person!"

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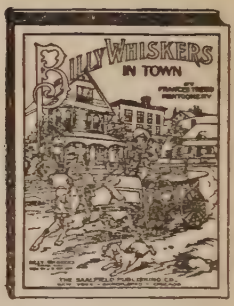


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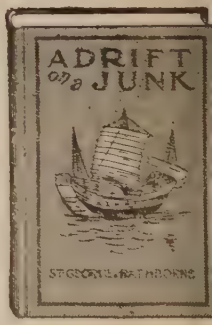


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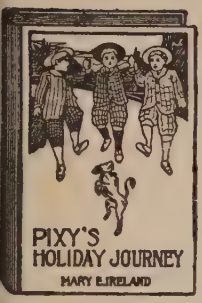


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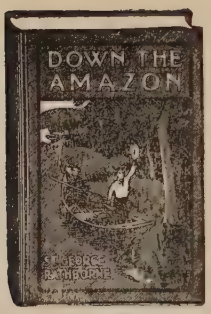


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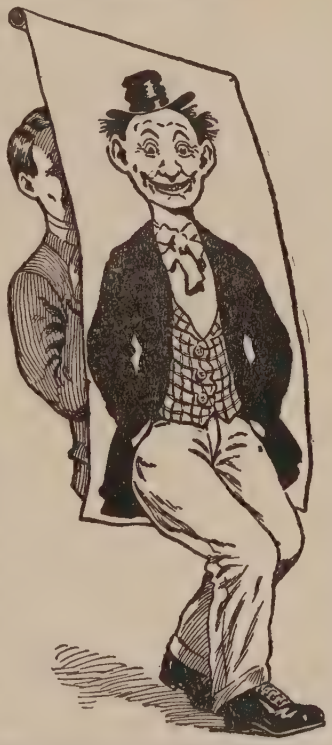

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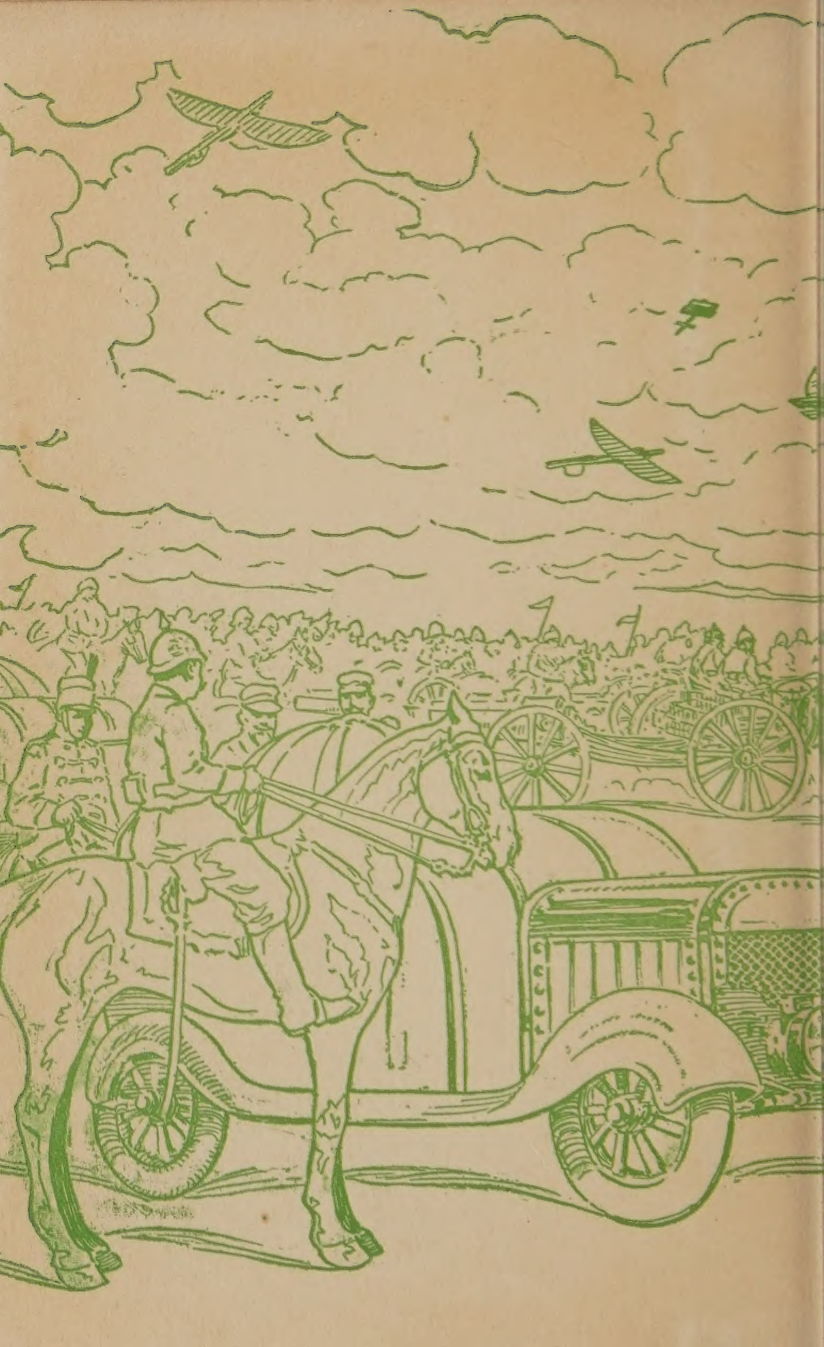

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